

Islam and Modernity

KEY ISSUES AND DEBATES

Edited by Muhammad Khalid Masud,
Armando Salvatore and Martin van Bruinessen

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Preface

The idea of the present book emerged in 2002 when the editors began developing a postgraduate course on Islam and modernity at the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) in Leiden, The Netherlands. Our aim was to engage with Western social thought as well as with the ideas and visions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers in the Muslim world concerning the political, socio-economic and cultural transformation of their societies. We found that there was no single book we could use to introduce the range of subjects that we thought essential for such a course. The scholarly literature on various aspects of Islam and modernity is rich and complex and rapidly expanding, but there is a dearth of general works that offer an interdisciplinary perspective and overview of the major questions and debates in this literature. We convened a workshop at ISIM on 'Islam and Modernity, Key Issues and Debates' in October 2004. The present book is an outcome of continued deliberations and revisions of the papers presented at the workshop.

The book aims to provide reflections on major debates that have taken place within and between the various scholarly disciplines that have addressed questions of modernity in connection with Islam and Muslim societies. The book is organised in three parts. The first part, 'Conceptualising Modernity', consists of two chapters that introduce theoretical and general issues in modernity studies. The four chapters in the second part, 'Negotiating Modernity', offer an analysis of the processes of modernisation of Muslim societies, focusing on certain specific aspects of their social and political dynamics. The four chapters in the third part, 'Debating Modernity', survey how Muslim scholars and intellectuals have perceived and responded to issues of modernity. The contributors to the book are drawn from among the best-known scholars in the field, whose earlier work we found most seminal and stimulating in our teaching.

The immediate background to the importance of producing such a textbook is under everybody's eyes. Dramatic events have focused public attention on the potential tensions between the Muslim world and the modern West. Are such tensions rooted in real differences or in distorted perceptions? Compared to the other world religions, Islam appears either more resistant to internal development, with less prospect of change or, in spite of all efforts at reform, inherently pre-modern. Islam, it is frequently claimed, has experienced neither a major reformation, as has Christianity, nor been touched by Enlightenment. Or, paradoxically, as some observers would have it, Islam would no longer be Islam if truly reformed.

The new Islamist movements that emerged in the 1970s out of earlier reform trends and forms of socio-political mobilization (most notably the organization of the Muslim Brothers that saw the light in the late 1920s) appear to be primarily directed against the modernising secular elites that have dominated most Muslim societies during the first decades of post-colonial independence. Some observers (for example, Bruce Lawrence) have described these movements as a 'revolt against modernity'. Other scholars, on the other hand (notably the British philosopher John Gray, but also many others), have commented on the essential modernity of these same movements

Muslim societies have been subjected to most of the structural changes that have also impacted upon other societies in the world – such as massive urbanisation, mass education, dramatically increased communication, the emergence of new types of institutions and associations, erratic yet at times powerful waves of political mobilisation and major transformations of the economy. These developments have been accompanied by the emergence of a wide range of new social movements, often matched by heated religious and ideological debates that were more complex and varied than is commonly assumed in Western public discourse. The academic literature on such topics is extensive and rapidly growing. One of the most contentious issues being debated concerns the idea of the uniqueness and singularity of Western modernity versus the notion of inherently multiple modernities unfolding through a variety of trajectories. Yet both the literature and the debate are still fragmented and inaccessible to a wider public. No consensus has emerged even about the terms in which the debate should be carried on; the concept of modernity remains ambiguous and risks becoming hostage to opposing paradigms.

Each of the chapters in this volume deals with some specific aspects of the encounter of Muslim societies with modernity. Although each of the contributors is inevitably more familiar with particular societies and regions than others, and individual chapters may have a certain regional emphasis, the volume as a whole does not privilege the Middle East or any other region but covers the entire Muslim world. The chapters are thematically organised, and we have made an effort to ensure that developments in all major regions are represented.

We wish to acknowledge ISIM's financial support for the initial workshop and part of the editing process and thank especially Sanaa Makhlouf for her editorial help. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all our colleagues who supported this project, especially David Waines for his invaluable cooperation at the initial stages of this project. Lastly we wish to thank the students at ISIM, whose participation in the course and discussions helped in the development of this project.

Muhammad Khalid Masud
Armando Salvatore
Martin van Bruinessen

PART 1

Conceptualising Modernity

CHAPTER 1

Tradition and Modernity within Islamic Civilisation and the West

Armando Salvatore

The Islamic civilisation in the modern world

'In the sixteenth century of our era, a visitor from Mars might well have supposed that the human world was on the verge of becoming Muslim' (Hodgson 1993: 97). With this statement, the comparative historian Marshall Hodgson suggested that at the dawn of the modern era Islam was the most vital civilisation in the world and that it held a hegemonic potential over East and West. Hodgson called Islamic civilisation 'Islamdom', in analogy with 'Christendom', which is different from Christianity, intended as a religion. Islamdom was the civilisation that had inherited and creatively recombined the cultural characters and the political specificities of a vast and more ancient geo-cultural unit, the Irano-Semitic area. According to Hodgson, at exactly the time of inception of the modern era Islamdom reached the zenith, not only of its political power, but also of its cultural creativity (ibid.: 100).

This particular strength of Islamic civilisation at the dawn of modernity did not suddenly evaporate at the moment West European powers affirmed their primacy in long-distance maritime trade and discoveries, in particular with the opening of transatlantic routes and the creation of colonies in the East and West of the enlarged globe. The specific ways of blending power and culture that constitute a civilisation continued to bring fruits well into the modern era in the case of Islamdom's three different, yet equally flourishing, empires: the Ottoman, in a large area covering Anatolia, the Near and Middle East, North Africa, the Balkans and other European regions; the Safavid, in Iran; and the Mughal, in South Asia. Their models of state centralisation, control of territories and populations, and styles of ruling and administration partly survived the traumas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during which Western Europe turned around the power balance with the Muslim world and gained a hegemonic position over the Euro-Mediterranean area and into the Eurasian depths. Yet, at least in the Turkish and the Iranian cases, the long-term, relative strength of their socio-political formations can be measured by the degree of resistance of their centres to the ongoing process of Western colonial encroachment, which started to exhaust its impetus only between the two world wars of the twentieth century.

In spite of this historical setting and of the early modern configuration of

Muslim power, a host of historians and social theorists – from Ernest Renan (1862), through Max Weber ([1922] 1968), up to Bertrand Badie (1987), Marcel Gauchet ([1985] 1997), and Rémi Brague ([1992] 2002) – have theorised about specific cultural factors to be held responsible for the blockage or delay of the rationalisation of social relations and political and economic development inside Muslim lands. Within this variegated body of Western scholarship, the argument gained currency (and is still popular today) according to which an all-encompassing doctrine of divine authority proclaimed by Islam decisively contributed to withhold a full legitimisation of political power and so prevented a truly modern state formation. Similarly, the presuppositions necessary to capitalist growth that enlivened the early modern socio-political formations of Western Europe were absent or weak within the above-mentioned Muslim empires because of in-built mechanisms of cultural self-limitation allegedly inherent in the religious orientation of Islamic civilisation.

Along this line of argument, the mismatch between Islam and modernity appears to reside in a purportedly doctrinal limitation of factors of cultural creativity and political autonomy, which are considered the necessary ingredients for the constitution of a modern society, economy and polity. Accepting this approach, the Western colonial encroachment upon Muslim lands might be interpreted as a necessary consequence and a deserved outcome of the imbalance of power between the Western and Islamic civilisations, measured in terms of their ability to produce modern standards of social and political power and cultural hegemony via a process of emancipation from the self-limiting patterns of transcendent authority.

Against this background of Western theorising about the allegedly deficient capacity of Islamdom to fit into a modern world – not to speak of its ability to initiate autonomous modern transformations – stands the observation by historians of the Islamic civilisation and in particular of the modern Muslim empires that a differentiation of state power and religious authority was integral to their development. Neither Islamic traditions and their upholders, the ulama, nor the centres of power and power-holders (whether they were endowed with a specifically religious legitimacy, like the caliphs or the Shiʿi rulers of Safavid Iran, or not, like amirs, sultans etc.) obstructed such a process of differentiation. Since the 1970s and 1980s civilisational analysts have started to revise the older bias of Western social theorists. As unequivocally stated by a leading scholar in the field, Johann P. Arnason (2001: 399):

> The belief that Islamic traditions excluded any differentiation of religion and politics has not quite disappeared from public discourse, but scholarly debates have effectively demolished it; it is now widely accepted that Islamic history is characterised by specific forms and trajectories of differentiation, neither identical with those of other civilisations nor reducible to a lower degree of the same dynamic.

Bernard Lewis (2002) was not the first author to ask the question *What Went Wrong?* with regard to Islam. The limits of the arguments inhere in the question itself, which is formulated and asked from the specific viewpoint of a long-term Western hegemony extended over the entire modern world. It is a question that already presupposes the uniqueness of the Western path to modernity.

There are two strategies that can challenge this entrenched bias. One approach lays the stress on the importance to theorise about tradition before analysing patterns of modernity. The other option reframes the issue of modernity in terms of partly competing and partly overlapping patterns of modernity, or 'multiple modernities' (Eisenstadt 2000a). Under specific conditions, which I will attempt to spell out, the two strategies might converge in delivering a different view on the potentials and limits of an 'Islamic modernity'. This is the combined approach pursued in this chapter and more broadly in the book, an approach that is largely indebted to comparative civilisational analysis, an emerging branch of study that tries to create a meaningful nexus between the work of historians and the reflections of social theorists (Arnason 2003).

Let us start with the notion of 'tradition'. Recuperating a viable concept of tradition is a necessary condition for overcoming the reductionist, evolutionist and Eurocentric viewpoint that has marred most of the analyses of the relationship between Islam and modernity. Tradition is a more specific concept than the more general idea of 'culture'. Tradition should not be understood as non-reflexive, primordial culture but, more dynamically, as the ensemble of practices and arguments that secure the social bond and provide cohesiveness to human communities of varying scale. We need to disentangle the notion of tradition from its lopsided identification with all manifestations of socio-economic stagnation and blind dependence on unquestioned authority. In this sense, tradition is not the opposite of modernity intended as the manifestation of human autonomy and creativity.

Yet the idea of tradition as a static, primordial culture is widespread in the social sciences. Tradition thus conceived represents the internal limit of modernity, what modernity falls back upon when it fails to deliver its promises of political autonomy and cultural creativity. Accordingly, tradition is described as an almost inertial terrain of human action. Depending on whether tradition nests in non-Western communities or in civilisations of the past, its investigation is consigned to ethnographic research or to philological analysis. Such a negative notion of tradition has often been identified with 'religion', which then happens to be viewed in its most archaic forms. In this perspective, tradition is nothing more than the iteration of the ritual constitution of communities, a mechanism that excludes a capacity of innovation and prevents a transformation of communitarian cohesion into more abstract and differentiated forms of the social bond, those considered proper of modern societies. In contrast to this approach, I propose an understanding of tradition and modernity neither as antithetical modes of social

being, nor as typologically distinct social formations, but as forms of the social bond that are different but can become organically connected in various ways. It is the combination of certain types of tradition with given processes of transformation that produces distinctive societies that we call 'modern'. Modern societies can be related to each other and form civilisational clusters to the extent they are premised on similar combinations of traditions and modern patterns.

I propose to see traditions as bundled templates of social practice transmitted, transformed and reflected upon by arguments and discourses across cultures and generations. The cultural codes of traditions are administered by cultural elites but also depend on the active role played by practitioners, who are primarily the common people or 'commoners'. In this sense, traditions are relevant both within pre-modern communities and – in a starkly mutated form – within modern or modernising societies. Some authors have appreciated the importance of cultural traditions for the formation of the collective identity of social groups at the moment they attempt to enter modern society and fit into its rationalising parameters. This argument originates in some currents of social theory, most notably, yet not exclusively, located in North America (Bellah 1970; Shils 1981; Taylor 2004). A simplified variant of this approach has been also adopted within development-oriented studies, also with regard to Muslim majority societies, since the 1980s, basically as part of a larger trend of disillusionment with earlier approaches to economic and political development formulated within the paradigm of modernisation theory. Accordingly, traditions should be considered as resources within processes of social and political change that help prevent the spread of individual anomie, collective de-acculturation, and their related, multiple backlashes afflicting various levels of social and political life. Cultural traditions are thus considered potential assets for activating the motivational prism of local actors and helping the work of those modernising agents (including NGOs) that intervene from the inside or outside of a given society in order to improve the well-being of populations.

Perhaps this perspective is not completely satisfying to our aims, since it still retains a thrust of functionalism inherited from modernisation theory. Where tradition was once considered the backward culture to be overcome via modernisation processes, it now bifurcates into a 'good' and a 'bad' tradition: the type of tradition that prevents development and access to modernity is contrasted with a tradition that facilitates avenues of social progress. The line of demarcation between a tradition doomed to reiterate its cycles of stagnation and rituals of confirmation of authority and a tradition that provides cultural orientation and moral guidance to both elites and common practitioners through the uncertainties of modern life and the abstractions of modern norms is reminiscent of an idea that was already present in classic authors of social theory: think of Weber's emphasis on cultural and more specifically religious traditions as engines for the rationalisation of life conduct (Weber [1920] 1988), or of Durkheim's

appreciation of pre-modern religion for providing fundamental, though still defective, notions of solidarity (Durkheim [1912] 1967). By conceiving of tradition either as an impediment to modernisation or as a resource to it, traditions are conceptualised from the viewpoint of a preconfigured path to modernity. Their viability is subjected to the parameters of judgement (nowadays often called 'conditionalities') of modernising agencies linked to states, international organisations and capitalist markets.

The necessary condition for overcoming these limitations and opening up a path for appreciating the culturally pluralistic dimension of modernity and in particular the specific way Islamic civilisation has engaged with modernity is to deepen the attempt to reformulate the notion of tradition. We can benefit from an understanding of tradition as a bundle of arguments, concepts and practices motivating the social agents (MacIntyre 1988). Tradition thus conceived is essential to social action, communication and even cultural and institutional innovation. It would be difficult to conceive of the social bond without referring to the working of tradition demarcating a field of practice whose maintenance depends on adequate mechanisms of transmission and renewal of knowledge through generations (Calhoun 1992; Salvatore 2007a).

This view of tradition can be enriched with Jürgen Habermas's understanding of the connective tissue linking social agents, which is integral to their life-world and fosters their mutual recognition (Habermas [1981] 1987). Habermas's focus is on the sharing of motivations to action via patterns of communication and understanding. The least common denominator between the approaches of MacIntyre and Habermas – two among the leading social thinkers of the last third of the twentieth century – provides us with a view of tradition that lays stress on the communicative competencies that agents acquire by their engagement with a set of practices and the corresponding learning processes activated via communication and reflection (Doody 1991). Here lies the bottom line for a definition of tradition rooted in the micro-dimension of social action and social relations. We thus avoid falling back onto a minimalist notion of tradition of the type illustrated above, a view that is negatively charged by its unilateral emphasis on a macro-sociological dimension of socio-political change that is basically blind to human difference.

Yet our goal to create a more equitable ground to assess Islam's relations to modernity cannot renounce capturing a macro-sociological dimension of tradition that avoids the above-mentioned pitfalls. Not surprisingly, this is possible through a theoretical opening to the long under-theorised concept of civilisation. Johann P. Arnason's civilisational theory is key in this respect. Arnason's approach strikes a balance between civilisation in the singular, that is, modernity as a global civilising process in the sense highlighted by Norbert Elias ([1939, 1976] 1982) – a process that also configures the programme to overcome civilisational differences – and civilisation in the plural, that is, a world of diverse

civilisations facilitating the emergence of multiple modernities (Arnason 2003). The macro-sociological dimension of tradition becomes the cultural component of a specific civilisation. A civilisation always combines power and culture in original ways; therefore, the constitution and mutual relations between political and cultural elites are crucial to the working of civilisations. A civilisation transcends the closed boundary of a specific, national society and articulates across time (epochs) and space (geo-cultural units) the spectrum of possibilities of societal organisation allowed within culturally specific notions of power and within power-determined configurations of cultural traditions. The way power is exercised and legitimised is therefore dependent on cultural traditions: on the codes of legitimacy elaborated by cultural elites, but also on the concrete, everyday practice and judgement of the commoners. The dialectic of power and culture is specific to each civilisation. Such dialectic also determines the specificities of Islamic civilisation, as we will see in more detail.

The cultural dimension of civilisation, represented by traditions, is highlighted by Arnason's interpretation of Marshall Hodgson's understanding of tradition, developed in the latter's study of Islamic civilisation (Hodgson 1974) and in his comparisons between the Western and the Islamic civilisations (Hodgson 1993). This approach helps specifying the relation between the micro- and the macro-dimensions of a civilisation, between a tradition of practice and communication and its structural underpinnings. Not by chance were Hodgson's ideas developed in the context of his study of Islam and therefore critical of the prevalent, trivialised notions of tradition developed and used within the modernisation theory circles. Instead he stressed creative action and cumulative interaction as essential traits of traditions. In this sense, civilisations by necessity rely on traditions and are defined by them (Arnason 2006a), via their capacity to support the social bond at a micro-level (Salvatore 2007a).

In order to understand the dimension of power inherent in Islam as a tradition or as a set of bundled traditions, we can refer to some interventions by Talal Asad (1986), who responded to the functionalism still at work within the approach of several anthropologists and sociologists of Islam. Re-evaluating tradition does not mean to obliterate structures of – or constraints upon – actions, which are ultimately determined by how power works and is instituted in a given social context. It should not lead to neglect power and the accumulation of wealth as a specific means to – and effect of – power as major factors impinging on how traditions are articulated in a concrete social setting. Yet the pursuit itself of power and wealth is to some extent dependent on how cultural traditions frame their desirability and on how social actors pursue their benefits: on how material and immaterial 'goods' are culturally defined. The working itself of power depends on how power is conceptualised and put into practice within specific civilisational contexts, which are in turn influenced by cultural traditions (Arnason 2003).

Moreover, through their underlying web of practice and communication, traditions have the potential to tame indiscriminate, arbitrary power. Its practitioners struggle to prevent the unfolding of blindly functionalistic rationalities within society, mainly finalised to the maximisation of efficiency, the accumulation of wealth, the centralisation of power and the optimisation of control. Traditions also facilitate the transmission, and when necessary contestation, of patterns of authority in any given social formation. In a modern setting, they might survive and sometimes thrive. As a result, authority can be legitimate only if it is able to govern, practically and cognitively, the web of practices and communication – given certain flows of resources and their distribution among the practitioners. For sure, the creation and contestation of the types of authority that hold together traditions can also, simultaneously, affect the flow and distribution of resources and create unjust social relations. Traditions are not power neutral or blind, since they also provide orientation to the shaping of power patterns and legitimacy to power holders.

This principled openness of tradition vis-à-vis power creates occasions and provides justifications for a contestation of authority by practitioners who protest the extent to which power is unwarranted by authority, or authority is exaggeratedly upheld by the sheer exercise of untamed power. While looking at traditions, we should consider the mechanisms through which their working immunises their practitioners – and to some extent also those who hold authority – from seeing power as an end of social action in itself. Such a syndrome of a fully autonomous power has usually been associated with the power machinery of modern states. Michel Foucault (1991) best described it in his works on Western modernity, which emphasise the productivity of power in constituting subjectivities that fit into that power machinery. The mechanism of immunisation against a full autonomisation of power at work within traditions has to perform decently well for the tradition to thrive or at least to survive under modern conditions. The price a tradition has to pay for an enduring failure in this immunisation effort is a state of disturbance, a deep crisis, an outright collapse and dissolution. The alternative is, as in the trajectory of Western societies, a mutating implosion of tradition and the creation of a new, autonomous form of power, culminating in the machinery of the modern state (Salvatore 2007a). The ordeal of the ongoing, civilisation-building tension between culture and power is solved via the affirmation of a culture of power or of a 'civilised power'. Here is where the approaches of Elias on the civilising process and of Foucault on the building of modern subjectivities and disciplines seem to converge. Commenting on such views, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (2006) has recently reaffirmed the higher malleability of Weber's notion of the relations between culture and power for a comparative approach valuing civilisation-specific combinations and trajectories.

The conceptualisation of tradition that I have just proposed can be used to

inoculate us against a too one-sided identification of a Western and modern pattern of solution to the crucibles of culture and power with modernity *tout court*. This is why an adequate conceptualisation of traditions – not only of their plurality but also of their internal contestability and their entangled dynamics – is essential to open up horizons for theorising and comparing multiple modernities. In this fashion, we might attain a more nuanced and plastic variant of the previously mentioned approach to tradition as a resource that the social actors employ for interpreting social situations and gaining orientation in the world, or as a resource for institutional solutions to social problems. Yet we should eschew the macro-sociological simplification luring behind an approach to 'tradition as resource', which can reintroduce a functionalism in disguise, instead of keeping us focused on the degree of openness of traditions and the contestability of their interpretations.

The risk of a new functionalism is particularly visible within a trajectory of reflection attempting to reformulate the Durkheimian heritage – which laid a privileged emphasis on religion as a crucial provider of social integration – into an approach that attempts to reconcile the modern notion of religion with the dynamics of tradition, now condensed in the form of the 'shared values' of a given society. The result is a reduction of religion to a subjective search for meaning that is exposed to intersubjective understanding and communication. Leading social theorists like the sociologist Robert Bellah and the anthropologist Clifford Geertz supported this view and elaborated on it, albeit from different angles. Most notably, Geertz tried to reconstruct a viable notion of culture, not in the form of a cultural tradition, but understood as a 'cultural system', variably rooted in religion, and at work in various forms of Muslim practice in such distant places as Morocco and Indonesia. Accordingly, as a system of meaning, religion might be shaped in culturally variable ways in different parts of the world, but its functions of stabilising the lifeworld and providing cohesion to society remain basically the same anywhere (Geertz 1973: 87–125). Through this reconceptualisation of culture, we gain the view of an impersonal system of social power seconded by a variety of local cultural practices, while the interpretative openness of wider cultural traditions is questioned: in Geertz's neofunctionalist view of culture – and of religion as culture – there is no such thing as an Islamic tradition, even less an Islamic civilisation. Talal Asad has been the most uncompromising critic of this view of religion as culture, which understates the character of tradition as an ensemble of practices subject to scrutiny through intersubjective argument and collective endeavours to revision, contestation and innovation. Asad has convincingly exposed the monolithic and clear-cut notion of religion, shared by sociologists and anthropologists alike, demarcating a field radically severed from the connectedness of both cultural practice and institutional power. He has denied the possibility of defining religion in universal terms, 'not only because its constituent elements and relationships are

historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes' (Asad 1993: 29).

'Religion' between tradition and modernity

Asad's critique has not spared Weberian social science. However, we should acknowledge that Max Weber provided precious elements for defining tradition while steering clear of an essentialising and transhistorical definition of religion. He was not interested in drawing general anthropological conclusions from the observation of man's experience of religious awe mediated by a feeling of alienation from the powers of this world, but rather focused on reconstructing how different religious ways to relate to the world contributed to ground specific forms of life conduct. Weber focused especially on the elaboration of life conduct performed by specific social 'carriers' of religious orientations and wider cultural values. This approach yielded a focus on the formation of criteria of rationalisation of daily affairs though a privileged attention devoted to the work of cultural elites (see Sadri 1992).

Weberian theory is important, since it provides a basic repertoire for the formation of the toolkit of categories we still use for making sense of the relationship between Islam and modernity. But we should also be aware that this Weberian repertoire is itself incorporated in the historical process through which Western civilisation gained the upper hand over against Islamic civilisation. Yet one should not fall victim to a conspiracy theory viewing Orientalism as a discourse on the Orient in general and on Islam in particular, which merely reflects the process of constitution of a Western hegemonic subjectivity. The categories deployed in the process have been subject to a relentless contestation, and it is to be welcomed that, especially since the 1960s, this critique has helped to widen the horizon of analysis to include more fairly balanced comparative views: of civilisations, of traditions and, lastly, of modernities (Salvatore [1995] 2007b). In particular, the observations stressing the difference of the Islamic concept of *din* from its convenient but reductive translation as 'religion' has also contributed to the expansion of the critical horizons on comparative analysis. Such a critique has itself a rather Orientalist origin and structure of argument, to the extent that it is grounded on a view of Islam's 'difference' (Salvatore 1997).

The problem of Orientalism and of the Western study of Islam, evidenced by the work of Edward Said (1978), should be situated in the wider context determined by the politically overloaded character of the study of religion, which occupied the central stage in the genesis of the social sciences in the longer nineteenth century in Europe. In the framework of a hardening competition among various disciplines and approaches that attempted to locate the sources and explain the modes of human sociability and the nature itself of the social bond, religion was identified as a key sphere of human endeavour, whose emergence

basically coincided with the formation of organised community life. In countries like France and Germany, comparative linguistics and comparative mythology competed with text criticism and history in situating the forces of religion in the constitution and reproduction of human society. Anthropology and sociology finally joined in the field of exploration and definition of the overlapping dimensions of religion. In the emerging paradigm of the sociology of Emile Durkheim and his school, religion became the overarching category for investigating the nature of the collective forces providing cohesion to society via successive – ever more abstract and in this sense rational – models of solidarity (Durkheim [1912] 1967; Tarot 1999).

The development and institutionalisation of the academic study of Islam and the rise of Islamic Studies throughout Europe was integral to this development (Stauth 1993). Biblical criticism played an additional role in this trajectory, providing the model for the study of the texts of the Islamic tradition (Asad 2003; Johansen 2004). Yet the definition and typologisation of Islam as the cultural source of a distinctive civilisation also played an explicit or implicit role in the work of several social theorists who were not specialists of Islamic Studies. Thus the study of Islam became integral to the concerns not only of language and area specialists, but also of scholars within social-science disciplines, who considered Islam as the closest unity of comparison for the definition of the parameters of the social theory of religion. These parameters have since the nineteenth century been moulded by reflections on the long-term trajectory of the civilisation of Latin Christendom in Western Europe, often starting from Late Antiquity, passing through the Middle Ages and reaching up to the early modern Reformation and Wars of Religion and the gradual affirmation of largely secular states and secularised societies via the Enlightenment. The emerging parameters for the study of religion were part and parcel of the definition of the identity of Western Europe, or even of the 'West' or 'Occident'.

The genealogy of religion within the Western path to modernity reached as far back to the Roman civilisation: not surprisingly, since *religio* is not only a Latin word, but also one imbued with a specifically Roman idea of what is due to the gods by the Roman citizens in exchange for the function played by the gods in the ritual constitution of both authority and community. As a specific word and as an increasingly important concept, *religio* underwent far-reaching transformations within Latin Christendom after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Yet the seeds of its originally functionalist meaning have been retained to our days. In a modern context the function of religion can be flexibly shifted back and forth between the religion of the state and the religion of the subject, between publicness and inwardness (Tenbruck 1993).

It is important to note that neither the Greeks nor the Hebrews – mostly invoked as the two civilisations of the ancient world that have provided the key sources to the identity of the West throughout the long-term trajectory

that culminated in its hegemony over the modern world – had such a clear-cut notion of religion. If Islam also lacks a comparable word or idea, it shares a noble company. The Islamic keyword *din*, usually considered the closest equivalent to 'religion', is more complex and diffuse and less functionally streamlined than its Latin counterpart. Instead of designating a functional bond between men and gods beneficial to the health of the state, *din* indicates the somewhat open partnership between man and God and the potentially constructive moral tension emanating from it. Starting from this basic meaning, *din* also encompasses other layers of signification, one of which denotes the way to be followed for human beings to reach God (a meaning close to *shari'a*), while another meaning focuses the moment of judgment, as in the Qur'anic notion of *yawm al-din*, the Day of Judgment.

In Western Europe the tension between the focus on a state function and the insistence on the soul's privileged relation to God and its salvation was left unresolved, until, with the constitution of the modern state a compromise was struck between the state's control of the religious field and the sovereignty of the soul, between publicness and inwardness. This normative arrangement is, however, unnecessary from the viewpoint of the historic dynamics through which the Islamic *din* was incorporated within socio-political structures. The *din* ('religion') and the *dawla* ('state') designed distinct though at times overlapping fields of social activity and production of human value. Interestingly, perhaps, the conceptual pair comes close to the way culture and power are conceptualised within comparative civilisational analysis: not as the facing of church and state intended as two separate institutions, nor of the private and the public as two distinct spheres, but as two poles of activity and sources of value that permanently contribute to each other's definition while retaining their principled autonomy.

The reasons why Islam has often represented a civilisational model neatly contrasting with the European historical trajectory of transformation of religion and of its relations to the state cannot be reduced to cultural asymmetries, to a divergence of linguistic sensibilities or even to an alleged deficit of Islamic traditions to turn the tension inherent in the God–man relation into a socially fruitful and politically progressive differentiation of societal spheres. The West European tendency to insulate Islam as a convenient Other within easy grasp has paradoxically to do with the closeness and density of interaction and competition with the Islamic civilisation and the related political centres more than to any purported cultural distance or radical civilisational alterity. As much as it denies mutual interaction and exchange, essentialism is the product of them. Therefore, if the sociology of religion of European origin is intimately connected with the sociology of modernity, which has been primarily understood as a distinctive product of European civilisation, then Islam is both internal and external to this historical trajectory: while it constitutes an ensemble of social and

cultural potentialities that never became 'Europe', and, so, truly modern, it has posed a permanent challenge to European modernity through the development of a lively and for a long time (as we saw, well into the modern era) powerful counter-model.

Denouncing the views of Islam's defective relation to modernity as the product of essentialist misconceptions does not do justice to the mechanism of essentialisation. The form of essentialism here at play is deeply rooted in the general conception of 'religion', presented as universal while being part and parcel of a European trajectory of modernisation, and in the general understanding of 'tradition', intended as the antithesis to that trajectory of modernisation. In other words, essentialism is not necessarily the maligned tool of the instrumentalisation of the Other for maintaining the hegemony of the Self, as Orientalist critique often purports. It is the methodologically tempting sharp edge separating a view of civilisation and modernity conceived as singular, and the counterview of civilisation and modernity as not only plural but also as inherently open to contact, interaction and exchange – however conflicted they be.

No doubt Islam was particularly prone to become the object of a kind of social-scientific essentialisation as a 'traditional religion' preventing a modern societal differentiation and the autonomisation of political power from the tutelage of religious authority. What from this perspective 'went really wrong' with Islam (to use Lewis's simplistic terminology) is related to the divergent development of state–society formations between Western Europe and the Muslim world more than to inherently deficient cultural fundaments of the latter. If we register the importance of diverging political developments, we cannot frame the issue in terms of deficits to be considered essential to the Islamic civilisation as such. One should rather focus on the lopsided character of the pretended universal character of Western civilisation and of its key categories, premised on a unique view of economic rationalisation, social differentiation and political integration. Such categories affect both real politics and the social sciences. They are expressed via a monocivilisational discourse of modernity centred on Western supremacy and the apparatus of concepts used to make sense of an increasingly dichotomous world where modernity triumphant faces resisting traditions.

My previous detour on tradition as not merely the backdrop of modernity but as a force of history on its own right should now give way to a more specific analysis of Islam as a bundle of traditions striving to give coherence to a composite world, and the result of which is an 'Islamic civilisation' – itself quite unique, and which some authors such as Hodgson have preferred to conceptualise as a uniquely transcivilisational ecumene originally amalgamating 'Occident' and 'Orient' more than as a compact civilisation such as Western Europe, India or China.

The breakthrough of prophetic religions and the rise of Islam

Locating Islam within the field of civilisational analysis might be greatly facilitated by referring to the approach thus far known as 'Axial Age theory'. This strand of theory was initiated by such scholars – variably linked to Max Weber and Weberian circles in Heidelberg – as Karl Jaspers, Alfred Weber and Eric Voegelin. The theory rests on the hypothesis of a radical transformation of social life facilitated by the first basic differentiation of social fields out of archaic, holistic communities regulated by cyclical patterns and mythical views of the cosmological order, and out of the archaic states that took shape in some regions where irrigated agriculture flourished in organised forms, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia. This approach is particularly suitable to explain the invention or discovery of 'transcendence' across various civilisations in ways that highlight their plural and interactive dimension. The qualification of this historical, comparative and theoretical approach as 'axial' and its original reference to a specific 'age' are due to the fact that the philosopher of history Jaspers wanted to revise Hegel's dictum defining Christ as the 'axis' of human history. Jaspers overcame this euro-(Christo)-centric approach by considering not the advent of the Christ, but an epochal upheaval, cutting through the first millennium BCE and spreading across various Eurasian civilisations, as the axis of human history, and thus deserving to be called 'axial' (Jaspers [1949] 1953).

Especially in its Western components – intended as embracing the wider Euro-Mediterranean area and its adjacent civilisational cradles of the Fertile Crescent, and therefore also embracing what is conventionally designated as the Near and Middle East, including the Irano-Semitic region – a new type of religion emphasising a transcendent God became a key arrow of the axial transformations and of the civilisational impetus originating from them. This is clearly the case for Hebrew prophecy, but it also concerns Greek culture, including philosophy, which articulates transcendence in original ways (Eisenstadt 1982). Transcendence matters here, sociologically and not theologically, for facilitating the emergence of human agency through what is conventionally identified as the transition from *mythos* to *logos* or the emergence of human reflexivity out of a holistic and symbolically dense view of cosmic order. The idea of transcendence associated in particular with monotheistic religions helps in constructing values that transcend the human activities tied to the daily necessities, the 'world' as it appears: it projects beyond it another possible world. The main novelty of the axial breakthrough resides in 'the capacity of human beings to reflect upon and give expression to an image of the world as having the potential of being different from what it was perceived to be here and now' (Wittrock 2005: 262).

In this approach the religious dimension of civilisation is spelled out in terms that are familiar to social-science categories, without becoming squeezed into the narrower paradigms of the sociology of religion. The Axial Age theory

is itself the manifestation of the process through which a long-term essentialist and Eurocentric trend in describing the purportedly 'normal' trajectory of differentiation between society and religion becomes open to contestations, revisions and variations, by taking into account the formative experience of non-European civilisations. Accordingly, the crucial breakthrough in human history that is common to the civilisations of the West and East lies in a tension between the mundane world of material needs and power drives, on the one hand, and another world, indicated in the Western–Abrahamic, prophetic manifestations of the axial breakthrough as the 'hereafter', on the other. Value is constructed as an immaterial source of power facilitating repertoires of intersubjective understanding and connectedness between *ego* and *alter* basically alternative to those taking form within the mundane sphere and that are mainly identified with structures of domination and modalities of accumulation of wealth: the field of material power at large. In many ways, the problem of how *ego* has to relate to *alter* is reflected in the problem of how the world has to be related to the afterworld. The inscription of ties of brotherhood and solidarity into the social bond necessitated the projection of the human *alter* onto a transcendent *Alter*, usually defined, within Western axial civilisations, as God. In this frame the transcendence of *Alter* secures a permanent translation of the intersubjective tension inherent in human action into generalised values and categorical obligations. In a further step, transcendence also facilitates the construction of a public realm where individual action is judged by criteria of accountability measured by its fitting into the common good of a given community or of humanity. Caring for *alter* as manifested in the so-called Golden Rule summarising a human ethic of reciprocity (from Leviticus to the teachings of Confucius) is the solution to a tension that is perpetually recreated in human and social life. This tension is ever and again framed in fresh narrative forms, as in prophetic speech or in the teaching of sages, but also via philosophical reflection that, most notably in its Platonic orientation, also made use of symbols and narratives, reframed in a dialogically reflexive fashion.

We can thus decouple transcendence from a cosmological typology and consider it the engine of a specific type of discourse proclaiming the incompleteness of the mundane order and the need to transcend it. In particular, the axial discourse makes the power holders accountable to a transcendent power or divinity, which takes over the traits of unitary and supreme majesty over the cosmos, over human society and over the individual soul. The emergence of this pattern of accountability was accompanied by an institutionalisation of theological, juridical and philosophical discourses, and therefore by the crystallisation of a basic differentiation in the leadership of socio-political communities. This differentiation separating priests, scribes and scholars from the ruling class was not unknown to pre-axial formations. But the novelty of the axial breakthrough is that the cultural elites, which do not control the means of coercion and of

production, now wield a moral power over the ruling class, based on a competence to formulate general paths of virtuous life conducive to human welfare both in this world and in the hereafter. This specific type of power also became binding for the rulers. The proclamation of the hereafter and of related paths to salvation was necessary to impose a generalisation of human value, via the injunctions for *ego* to connect to the human *alter* and to behave well and fairly to him or her.

The axial separation of functions between rulers and clerics was nonetheless a tumultuous process. Most notably, the transformative character of the prophetic discourse that triggered off the differentiation in the Hebrew case – starting from Moses and the Exodus of the Hebrews from the tyranny of the Pharaoh in Egypt – lies in a continual reformation of the double idea of order as simultaneously mundane and ultramundane. This permanent instability was facilitated by the prophets' stubborn warnings that pushed forward the boundary between the two levels. The mundane shape of the order is here permanently subject to reflection, critique and reform as a consequence of the fact that it is always an imperfect match to the transcendent, more comprehensive order. While Isaiah was one major hero of the Axial Age, along with Zarathustra and Socrates, in the wider West, Siddhartha Gautama (Shakyamuni), Laotzi and Confucius were the leading personalities in the East.

While the original body of scholarship on the Axial Age fixes the period of the breakthrough around the middle of the first millennium BCE, later revisions suggest an ongoing process of axial transformations encompassing subsequent breakthroughs (Arnason 2005). The relationship between the mundane and the ultramundane orders was further redefined in the post-prophetic era that characterises each of the two major religious traditions of the Western area of the Afro-Eurasian landmass that was invested by axial transformations. With Christianity, the process of creating a new orthodoxy revolved around the first coming of the Messiah, who became the person of the Son in a trinitarian scheme of the Godhead. In Islam, the messianic impulse was strong at its inception but was effectively tamed within the emerging Sunni orthodoxy; the era of crystallisation of doctrine started right after the Qur'anic revelation given to Muhammad, the seal of all prophetic chains.

The axial framework helps avoiding the anachronism of dealing with 'religion' as a given sphere, field or system within society. With the help of this approach, we no longer need to presuppose the existence of specifically religious forms of social action, to be contrasted with those based on a civic or secular understanding of social and political life. At stake is rather the ongoing dialectic between the strength of cultural orientations – to which the idea of transcendence gave an unprecedented impulse – and institutional crystallisations. The specifically religious factor, rooted in the way it concurs to reforming the social bond, is then subsumed under the more general cultural impetus that moulds institutions.

'Religion' and 'politics' are two poles of human endeavour constantly implying – and impinging on – each other. To sum up, while the axial breakthrough dissolves the archaic unity of religion and politics (Gauchet [1985] 1997), 'the civilisational potential of religious traditions and transformations is most effectively realised in conjunction with political structures' (Arnason 2006b: 104).

In this sense, all civilisations that claim an axial pedigree, including Islam, are structured via a differentiation between the two realms and reinstitute a much more dynamic relationship between the sphere of culture, now centred on transcendent visions, and the power incorporated in institutional arrangements. In this framework, momentous new foundations of religions like the rise of Christianity and the emergence of Islam should be considered as re-combinations and new systematisations of older axial repertoires. These legacies provided patterns for distinguishing, and yet reconnecting, the realms of religion and politics. Religion is here not an autonomous sphere, bur rather a meta-institutional source of a new, immaterial dimension of human power and a field for its contestation. The way power is related to its ideational underpinnings and modes of cultural articulation is subject to variation across different religious traditions. The emerging authorities within the newly instituted religious traditions – church leaders in the Christian case, more diffuse and less institutionalised authoritative roles in the Islamic case – struggled against heterodox challenges via the creation of more solid orthodoxies than it had been possible in the original axial breakthrough. In this way, they were able to upgrade the universalistic potential of older traditions and effectively transcend consolidated civilisational boundaries.

The consolidation of Islam and the emergence of the commoner as the carrier of the common good

A balanced assessment of Islam's specific contribution to the axial framework could be that, for being the last and most consciously managed manifestation of the axial civilisational breakthrough within the Western part of the Afro-Eurasian hemisphere, Islam also marks the triumph of the 'commoner'. This motif had already been central to the preaching and teaching of key axial characters such as Isaiah and Socrates but had remained underappreciated in further developments. Islam incorporated from its origin the idea of a new, synthetic re-pristination of key aspects of those axial features that promoted a human orientation to the 'common good'. It brought about their, so to speak, mainstreaming and universalisation across a broad transcivilisational ecumene cutting through Europe, North Africa, the Near and Middle East and other regions situated further east and south-east across the depths of the Eurasian continent. The Greek philosophical heritage had a substantial influence on key aspects of Islamic traditions and was more harmoniously amalgamated with the

prophetic components than it was the case within Latin Christendom, where prophecy and philosophy remained in a state of principled, though also productive tension (Brague [1992] 2002). Several scholars (e.g. Nallino 1942; Hallaq 1989) have also taken the impact of Roman law on Islamic law and jurisprudence into consideration, although the issue remains controversial. As a result, it is fair to say that Islam has attempted to bring to perfection a crucial feature of axial civilisations in the reconstruction of the social bond – namely, the overcoming of pre-axial ties of authority, the taming of unbridled mythological imagination and the construction of an uncontaminated triad between *ego*, *alter* and God. As aptly formulated by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (2002: 148–9):

> [T]he emphasis on the construction of a political-religious collectivity was connected in Islam with the development of a principled ideological negation of any primordial element or component within this sacred political-religious identity. Indeed, of all the Axial Age civilisations in general, and the monotheistic ones in particular, Islam was, on the ideological level, the most extreme in its denial of the legitimacy of such primordial dimensions in the structure of the Islamic community . . . In this it stood in opposition to Judaism, with which it shared such characteristics as an emphasis on the direct, unmediated access of all members of the community to the sacred.

Though it arose, and always kept its main centre of gravitation, in the Irano-Semitic civilisational area, Islam has played the role of a creative synthesiser and diligent incorporator of the heritage of several civilisations whose only common denominator up to Islam's inception had been their dispersed axial dimension. The Qur'an gives prominence to the earlier chains of prophets, from Noah through Abraham to Jesus, and lays a strong emphasis on the opposition they met in their call to submission to God's will, which is condensed in the meaning of the Arabic word *islam*. In this sense, Muhammad's message was conceived as a restoration, completion and renaissance of the authentic Abrahamic faith through a final and unequivocal revelation of God's word and will to humankind. Not only the content of the Qur'anic message but the communicative and authoritative infrastructure of prophetic discourse and its means of inculcation were made particularly effective by Muhammad and the generations of Islamic scholars who came after him. God's message, revealed through the earlier prophets, had been received and incorporated in Judaism and Christianity in imperfect ways – according to the message of the Qur'an – because of the prevalence of sectarian passions and human ambitions over a pious concern for the truth and the common good. Islam, the new–old call to submission to God, was due to overcome divisions and manipulations and to embrace mankind in a truly universal *umma*: that is, a community of all believers, superseding all sectarian splits and tribal particularisms.

The sweeping success, after initial resistances, of Muhammad's preaching and proselytising between Mecca and Medina favoured a swift turn from

parabolic exhortation to an activist reconstruction of the social fabric and the political community. While it is an exaggeration to state that Muhammad was a conscious empire-builder (Fowden 1993: 138–52), his practice and judgement as the seal of all prophets and as the first leader of the new *umma*, committed to regulating human relationships, acquired paradigmatic value beyond the new text of revelation, the Qur'an. This scripture, centred on the call to conversion and on the retelling of several biblical and other narratives, dealt only – unlike the encompassing Deuteronomic Torah – with a limited number of issues immediately related to the ordinance of social life. The bulk of the new regulations was carried by the 'traditions' of Muhammad and his companions (*hadith*). The rise of Islam completed the transition from the empires of antiquity to the civilisational idea of a 'commonwealth' as a wider community whose cohesion does not depend on autocratic rule. In this sense, the advent of Islam brought to full fruition the axial power through which prophets, spiritual leaders and reformers had shaped patterns of the social bond that were potentially alternative to the logic of accumulation of sheer power characteristic of empire building. For sure, these patterns and the corresponding ideas of 'commonwealth' (now incarnate in the *umma*) were not in themselves opposed to empire building: in the classic age of Islam, they even fed into it.

The most salient originality of the new faith, which will bear a particular weight within intercivilisational dynamics and later in the encounter with modernity, was the growing strength of the carriers of Islamic civilisation in streamlining several theological nodes of Abrahamic and prophetic discourse directly affecting the double tension between this world and the other world – and between *ego* and *alter* – and in meeting the aspiration to a greater adherence of doctrine to practice. The main scheme of classification of action within Islamic legal–moral traditions (as inspired by God's law or *shari'a*) consists in the five categories of *wajib* (mandatory), *mandub* (recommended), *mubah* (permissible or indifferent), *makruh* (reprehensible) and *haram* (illicit, forbidden). It offers a sophisticated yet handy tool of orientation of moral action accessible to all practitioners and facilitates determining the degree of permitted creative interpretation versus undue innovations.

The Latin Christian primacy of inwardness is conventionally opposed to the Islamic centrality of *shari'a*. The elaboration on the notion of *shari'a*, at first a concept not essential to the repertoire of the jurists, was a prerogative of the theologians, who were often engaged in tense contentions with the custodians of the law. *Shari'a* developed in parallel with speculations on *din*, which unlike *shari'a* features quite centrally in the Qur'an. *Din*, usually yet imperfectly translated as 'religion', embraces the partnership itself between man and God. The new community of the faithful, the *umma*, was constructed on the basis of equal dignity among human beings, in their double identity as subjects and objects of *din*. *Shari'a* was framed – starting from its rare use in the Qur'an – as emanating

from God as commander. The articulate yet flexible meaning of this conceptual pair witnesses how an essentialised, modern Western notion of religion, as discussed above, can be only inadequately applied to Islamic tenets.

Theologians tended to see *din* and *shari'a* as two sides of the same coin, the former identifying the intimate link between creator and creature, the latter the path of rules and disciplines, concerning both the man–God relationship and the ego–alter intercourse. The synthesis of the leading theologian and Sufi Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111) showed that *shari'a* without *din* is an empty shell (Rahman [1966] 1979: 106). Before al-Ghazali authoritatively intervened in defining the link between *din* and *shari'a*, during the last period of the formative phase of canonisation of the Sunni way – that is, in the ninth century CE – theologians and jurists had fought a major battle that enduringly influenced the Muslim understanding of Islamic normativity. A school called Mu'tazila, which enjoyed a hegemonic position at the time, subsumed the idea of God under the notion of cosmic justice. The consolidating Sunni consensus (rather than 'orthodoxy') opposed this attempt and reaffirmed the centrality of the Qur'an and revelation.

In the perception of some leading jurists, theological speculation threatened to erode the piety enjoined by the God of the living tradition, who is the compassionate commander of good, among other numerous attributes. The Mu'tazila thinkers aimed instead to obliterate all such attributes, since they feared that they would diminish the notion of God as a pure essence of justice, as an Aristotelian prime mover. This ninth-century clash was the only moment in Islamic history where one major part in a dispute tried to eradicate disagreement and win a contest through the use of inflexible judicial means against not just the one or the other thinker suspected of heterodoxy, but against a whole class of scholars, here the jurists and in particular the traditionists (scholars of *hadith*). The Mu'tazila succeeded in inciting the Caliph al-Ma'mun to institute the *mihna*, a sort of inquisition through which numerous scholars were interrogated and punished because of their doctrines: among them the founder of the most radically anti-theological and anti-philosophical among the four canonical Sunni schools, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780–855). The population of Baghdad supported the persecuted scholars against the Caliph and the Mu'tazila. This was a decisive battle to affirm the centrality of the Sunni mechanism of tradition-building pivoted on a diffuse science of *hadith* against any temptation to establish a centralistic orthodoxy based on a control over dogma (Hurvitz 2002).

Islamic philosophy (called *falsafa*), which flourished right after the epoch of canonisation of Qur'an and *hadith*, established a dual relation of absorption and rejection between Islamic high culture and the Greek philosophical heritage. Muslim philosophers confronted the main theoretical thrust of the contentions of the jurists, the theologians and the mystics. Unlike thinkers such as Aquinas within Latin Christendom, the practitioners of *falsafa* identified themselves

explicitly as philosophers, and by this very identification they put at least one foot out of the Sunni 'orthodox' consensus. Yet philosophy influenced even some key thinkers who directly clashed with philosophers, whose dialectic role in the process of reshaping the consensus is quite evident. In particular, Islamic philosophy contributed key elements to a theory of prophetic discourse that not only affected the most penetrating reflections provided by Islamic legal theory, but also contributed invaluable seeds to later discussions on religion and scripture within European modernity. The leading Islamic philosopher, Ibn Sina (980–1037), known in Europe as Avicenna, formulated the path-breaking hypothesis that prophetic speech receives its strength and persuasiveness from mythical imagery. According to him, such discourse was optimally shaped to match the imagination of the commoners and induce them to perform good deeds. Yet prophetic discourse is not 'untrue', since the use of imaginative symbols is necessary for effectively communicating the truth of religion (Rahman [1966] 1979: 119–20). The work of the philosophers evidenced the existence of a gulf between popular and intellectual cultures in spite of the importance of the commoners in Islam. This is why their interpretation was of limited practical use in reconstructing the doctrinal bases of the Sunni consensus. The contribution of philosophy to the redefinition of public reasoning within Islamic jurisprudential traditions will leave enduring traces. Many among those scholars who confronted themselves with the rational methods of *falsafa* – like Fakhr-al-Din al-Razi (d. 1209) – or even some among those who vehemently opposed these methods – like al-Ghazali – or took a prudent distance from them – like Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi (d. 1388) – contributed to introduce philosophical rigor into theology, Sufism and, finally, the theory of jurisprudence and law. As a result of these combined developments, a concern for the 'common good' through a focus on the 'commoner' – one crucial potential of axial transformations – became a central concern for Islam as a discursive tradition and for key Muslim actors, thus influencing some key presuppositions for Islam's own dealing with modernity at later stages.

Björn Wittrock (2001) has proposed the term 'ecumenical renaissance' to define the period of spiritual ferment and institutional crystallisations across the Afro-Eurasian civilisational area that occurred at a moment of maturity of Islamdom, around the turn of the first millennium CE, and reached its climax in the middle of the thirteenth century. These transformations, like the original axial breakthrough that brought about Hebrew prophecy and Greek philosophy, also embraced civilisations situated outside the Euro-Mediterranean area, such as China and India. Some scholars have attributed an increasing significance to the transformations of this age within Western Christendom, in some cases considering them no less important than the sixteenth-century Renaissance and Reformation, conventionally identified with the beginnings of European modernity (Arnason 2003). During this era Islamdom incorporated key cultural

components of Persian and Turkic origin. This period also witnessed the unfolding of the heterodox challenges of Shi'i groups and potentates towards the Sunni 'orthodoxy'. This dynamic will be carried over into the modern era with the rivalry between the Sunni Ottoman empire and Safavid Iran, which became the new stronghold of Shi'a.

The most significant commonality between Latin Christendom and Islamdom during the ecumenical renaissance was represented by the rise of mystically oriented movements drawing on the imagination and needs of the commoners, including city-dwellers. These movements, though potentially heterodox, were for the most part integrated into the orthodox mainstream and affected its institutional configuration both within Latin Christianity and Sunni Islam, with enduring consequences lasting till our days. They were equally significant, in both civilisational realms, in their work finalised to enhancing the social salience of the commoners and their desires for a renewal of norms and lifestyles within wider socio-economic trends spurning urban economies and cross-regional trade (Arjomand 2004; Rahimi 2006). More than highlighting the divergent paths of Western Europe and the Muslim world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we should stress the importance of a comparative view of this age of ecumenical renaissance between both civilisational areas. A better perspective for illustrating the paradigm of 'multiple modernities' can be the result of this analysis, which outlines a significant background to the investigation of the relations between Islam and modernity provided in the following chapters.

In Europe the rise of heretical movements and the simultaneous emergence of radical mendicant orders – in particular during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – manifested the pressures, on ecclesiastical institutions, of the practical necessities and aspirations of renewal that spread among the popular classes and the rising urban middle classes. A similar role was played within Islam by Sufism and the struggles surrounding its co-optation into the new forms of orthodoxy. Through subsequent waves, not only of military conquest, but also of religious conversion (that were in most cases temporally dissociated from each other), Islamdom became during this epoch a simultaneously Euro-Mediterranean and Asian ecumene, building a strong presence in Central Asia, in parts of China and especially in India, while also reaching out as far as South East Asia. On account of political and economic power, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the cumulative result of the transformations that took place during this period of renaissance prepared the terrain for a peak of Muslim ascendancy on a world scale in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Hodgson 1974, 1993).

During the ecumenical renaissance Sufism became ubiquitous in the Muslim world thanks to a fresh wave of diffusion and institutionalisation of mystical paths as practised in the brotherhoods (*turuq*). Sufism increasingly represented the most powerful challenge to the hegemony of the jurists. Later it will become

one key factor in Islam's confrontation with modernity. Sufis regarded *shari'a* as a suitable framework for governing the *ego–alter*–God relationship in routine, daily situations and common practice. Alongside, it was felt that a deepening of piety required a commitment to the inner truth of Islam or *haqiqa*. The competition between Sufism and jurisprudence not only helped redefining the place of *shari'a* within the Sunni consensus, but also highlighted the ongoing tension between the spiritual dimension of speculation and doctrine, on the one hand, and its practical and juridical implications, on the other. Unlike the philosophers, the Sufis did not raise the banner of rational speculation in the first place. They appropriated and sedated the tension between the spiritual and the practical levels of faith through distinctive practices and the construction of suitable associational forms. The Sufi challenge became particularly powerful in the last phase of the ecumenical renaissance, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, corresponding to the last phase of what Hodgson called the 'Early Middle Period' of Islamic history, which witnessed a deepening of Islam's cosmopolitan orientation and cultural expansiveness, a period terminated by the Mongol conquest.

The advantage of the orientation to piety of organised Sufism, compared to the scholarship of theologians and philosophers, consisted in the fact that Sufis anchored their spiritual claims within ritualised collective practices that facilitated building intersubjective connectedness by integrating the triadic matrix of the social bond (*ego–alter–Alter*) into cohesive groups, so avoiding both a dogmatist impasse and an elitist backlash. Starting from a first nucleus of Medinese piety and asceticism based on the Qur'anic notion of faithful trust in God (*tawakkul*) and of love for God – which was neither conflicting with, nor integrated into, the Medinese proto-state nourished by the charisma of the prophet Muhammad – the Sufi path first thrived because of the widespread sentiment that the process of canonisation of the law led by the jurists could not exhaust the truth of Islam, and that therefore a parallel tradition of piety immune from formalistic fixings was needed (Rahman [1966] 1979: 130). This approach was favoured by the fact that the absence of priesthood in Sunni Islam facilitated from the beginning an equation between the sincere faithful, the practitioner and the commoner (Hoexter and Levtzion 2002: 12). The enduring strength of Sufism is due to the fact that its remote roots are as old as the translation of Muhammad's message into pious practice by his companions, yet it is also particularly capable of adapting to changed socio-political circumstances, like the increasingly important role of non-Arab populations in the expansion of Islam during the ecumenical renaissance. Moreover the organised Sufism of the *turuq* responded to the resurfacing need for charismatic mediation that the absence of priesthood could not erase for ever.

The path of Sufism was quite innovative in that it formulated a solution to the problem of the relationship between rational speculation, on the one hand,

and prophetic discourse, on the other. This tense relationship reached a grave stalemate in the Sunni world with the work of Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), known in Europe as Averroes. His rationalist philosophy became the object of attacks by the *fuqaha'* (the practitioners of *fiqh* – that is, jurisprudence), though he was himself an active jurist. Sufism exploited the tension to its advantage in order to show its commitment to orthodoxy, by focusing on the exemplary value of the Sunna (the canonical practice) of the Prophet. Sufi leaders proved that the Sunna was a path of pious imitation of the Prophet's virtuous life that the single faithful had to practise via a disciplined training under the guide of a master, in order to gain access to the essential truth of faith, the *haqiqa*. This inner truth could be achieved only through establishing a close relationship to the human being who is particularly close to God, the prophet Muhammad, and to the other 'friends' (*awliya'*) of God, the new Sufi 'saints'.

Similar to the new monastic movements of the ecumenical renaissance in Latin Christian Europe, the consolidation of Sufism took on the form of a socio-religious movement of the commoners laying a claim to grasp the essence of the transcendent truth. This basic similarity is matched by clear differences with the European experience at the level of the institutional environment and with regard to the organisational form of the movements, as well as in terms of the required – individual and collective – disciplines. The most salient aspect of the wave of institutionalisation of Sufism during the ecumenical renaissance is that, while the new monastic orders in Europe influenced the renaissance of civic life while coming from outside the urban communities, the Sufi orders entered an almost symbiotic relationship with urban associations and especially with the craftsmen guilds, by providing them with ties of trust underpinned by the authority of the shaykhs (the masters) of the brotherhoods (see Gerber 1994: 113–26).

In this institutional environment, the leaders who cared for the consensus of the commoners were, and could only be, the ulama. It is important to provide a profile of their social skills and institutional rooting, in order to understand how the Islamic community was staffed at both a micro- and a macro-level of social organisation. As summarised by Eisenstadt (2002: 151):

> this highly autonomous religious elite did not develop into a broad, independent, and cohesive ecclesiastic organisation, and the religious groups and functionaries were not organised as a distinct, separate entity . . . It was the '*ulama*' who created major networks that brought together, under one religious – and often also social-civilisational – umbrella, varied ethnic and geopolitical groups, tribes, settled peasants, and urban groups, creating mutual impingement and interaction among them that otherwise would probably not have developed. And it was the '*ulama*', acting through different, often transstate, networks, who were the crucial element forming the distinctive characteristic of public spheres in Islamic societies.

The category of the ulama (or 'men of knowledge') should be understood in broader terms than being equal with the category of the jurists (the *fuqaha*'). The ulama also encompass Sufi leaders and cannot be reduced to a corporate group or to a professional identity. They represent those cultural elites who, basing their credentials on some 'orthodox' form of knowledge and leadership, are best positioned – thanks not only to their education but also to their social prestige – to shape a public space by providing services of various kinds. The diversity of opinions among them on various issues of both practical significance and conceptual relevance and the ensuing disagreements made them compete for the support of the restricted public of their peers (*al-khassa*) on the more theoretical questions, and of the commoners (*al-ʿamma*), on the questions of public interest (Rahman [1966] 1979: 261–2).

The modern state facing 'religion'

The dominant model of modernity – combining economic factors linked to the rise of capitalism, socio-political dynamics related to the formation of increasingly centralised and bureaucratised states, and cultural orientations putting a premium on individual and collective autonomy – reflects the historical experience of European societies or, better, of some key fragments of north-western Europe. The same applies to the concept of religion, which, in the form inherited from different branches of the social sciences – chiefly from the sociology of religion – took sharp contours in the course of the same modern political transformations and happened to refer to a differentiated – mostly though not always privatised – sphere. These processes set the West European pattern of political modernity apart from any alleged 'alternative modernity', Islamic or otherwise.

It suffices here, in the last part of this chapter, to sum up the peculiar relationship between tradition and modernity in the crystallisation of the European hegemony over the modern world. The genesis of European modernity was characterised, not by a sudden collapse, but rather by an implosion and radicalisation of key motives of axial traditions. At first, this process consisted of attempts to revitalise tradition. Yet most such attempts quickly exhausted the internal resources of tradition and provided impetus to fresh visions that fed into newly emerging power formations directly or indirectly tied to the modern state. In particular, the radicalisation of the social and political transformations initiated during the ecumenical renaissance led the religious reformers of the early modern era to stress the innerwordly components of traditions. These movements launched political challenges to institutional authority on the basis of reasons of the 'spirit'. In the process of upholding such reasons in a world that increasingly recognised the autonomous sovereignty of politics as incarnated in the modern state, the seeds were laid for fundamentalism, which emerged as an essential component of the antinomies of the modern order (Eisenstadt 2000b).

In other words, axial categories were not erased but were reinterpreted, radicalised and turned upside down by the new movements of the age, by instigating new visions of a kingdom of God on earth governed by the vanguard of the faithful, the 'people of God'. The religious reformers of the sixteenth century, led by Luther and Calvin, opted for a drastically new foundation of the order of the fading church institution. Yet the most striking example of a radical transformation based on the vision of an immanent shift of axial values previously oriented to transcendence was the revolution of Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) in England. This was not by chance the first revolution that has been considered as modern, and one that occurred in the cradle itself of economic and political modernity. The call for a kingdom of God now breaks the axial tension between immanence and transcendence and becomes a tool for their ultimate fusion, via programmes that bring immanence to the horizons of salvation. This outcome of the new breakthrough is a new type of civilisational power that becomes condensed in the machinery of the modern state (Voegelin 1998: 217–68).

Both the revolution of Cromwell as an instrument for instituting the unlimited sovereignty of the commoners via the state and Weber's idea of a Protestant ethic as an engine of unlimited capitalist development show that significant religious minorities now played radically innovative roles in core domains of society. A positive relationship emerged not only between religious disciplines and the transformations of the commercial and, later, industrial society, but also with the imperatives of regulation of action and concentration of power in the hands of the modern state. The process is well exemplified by the brutal simplification of the formulas of management of the formerly triadic relationship underlying the social bond via the emergence of a 'contract law' in England during the seventeenth century: the dealings of *ego* with *alter* were facilitated by a reduction of their tension according to notions of economic interest and business profit, thanks to the support of a benevolent Leviathan, the monster-like modern state depicted by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), upholding the observance of the now sacred law of contract (Hobbes [1651] 1996).

An important collateral effect of the process was a growing pressure to redefine the proper realm of religion. A drastic redefinition was achieved through the consecration of the political principle of *cuius regio eius religio*, a pillar of the emerging European international law with the Peace of Westphalia of 1648. This principle drastically reduced the instability of religiously motivated conflict by sanctioning the religion of the ruler in each and every state as the only legitimate one. This compressed religious realm came to be governed also from within, through rendering religion a matter of personal belief and sovereignty of the self within the 'inner forum'. The emerging states not only gained a legal legitimacy in governing the religious field, but also operated as the collectors of the surplus of meaning left uninvested by religious traditions and ungoverned

by the forms of authority they used to produce. Contestation is now polarised by the emerging centres of power and is no longer dissipated within the chasm that once separated the immanent and transcendent spheres.

The emerging secular thinkers of the epoch contributed to give meaning to the process by defying any resurgent temptation of a compromising of religious reformers with power, which would support theocratic forms of government – a temptation that was very much alive through the entire era of the Wars of Religion, was ignited by the Protestant Reformation and was terminated by the Peace of Westphalia, and whose most powerful incorporation, apart from some examples from the experience of leading reformers (like Calvin's Geneva), corresponds to the first stage of the 'puritan revolution' of Oliver Cromwell. In order to pursue this goal, first Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), then Thomas Hobbes, and finally, with more sophisticated tools, Baruch Spinoza (1632–77) attempted to re-create a principle of social cohesion that was no longer dependent on the cycles of upheaval and restoration, which had endangered the existence itself of the order of Latin Christendom at a time when the Ottoman threat was becoming most acute. Hobbes was a lucid theorist of the ultimate meaning of the sacralisation of national kingship that, originating in the period of the ecumenical renaissance in parallel with the erosion of the dual authority of pope and emperor, reached its apogee with the rise of absolutist monarchic rule in the seventeenth century. Hobbes delivered the image of the Leviathan, originally a biblical monster, as a direct metamorphosis of the Christ and his body, the church, now being transformed, in the shape of the absolutist state, into a mortal God or supreme super-person. This is evident from the frontispiece of the original edition of Hobbes's Leviathan, where this is represented, not as a biblical monster, but as a giant holding the pastoral staff on his left and the sword on his right – exactly in the inverted posture of the medieval representation of the dual yet converging spiritual and temporal powers as a unified body, whose head is the Christ (Taubes 1983). According to this Hobbesian representation and related theory, the state represents an inversion of the hierarchy of powers of the church, spiritual and temporal.

While the rigorous diagnosis of Hobbes singularises Western modern political theory and leaves no space for seeking patterns of cross-cultural comparisons and intercivilisational dynamics, Spinoza offers a more open approach, since he was heir to a more composite philosophical heritage, not anchored in the exclusive myths supporting the cohesion of Latin Christendom. The son of a Sephardic Jewish family that had resettled in Amsterdam because of the Catholic persecutions in the Iberian peninsula – formerly al-Andalus – he unsettled the Western trajectory of modern thought through the injection of motives drawn from other traditions. Spinoza pieced together distinct elements, some of which echo the most daring visions of Islamic philosophy and rationalist speculative theology, to deliver a highly original reinterpretation of the relation

between the individual and society, religion and the state. For Spinoza, God is the all-encompassing substance and is thus deprived of any anthropomorphic attributes, while man can realise his nature and pursue the good only in company with other men, since they are all equally empowered by God and equally benefit from combining their powers. *Acquiescentia* is the keyword of his recipe of good life. It cannot be properly translated in any modern European language. As suggested by Voegelin (1999: 129), it simply means *islam* – that is, trustful surrender to God – though this is certainly closer to the Islam of the philosophers and of the Sufis than to the Islam of the jurists.

While by nature men are multitudes of monads individually empowered by God, the traditional moral problem of performing good deeds for the benefit of *alter* and the wider community cannot be solved by implementing preordained catalogues of injunctions, but only when individuals pool in their fragmented powers into a common power. Thus they create rules governing the relation between multiple *ego*s and *alter*s, which so regulate the collective life of wider multitudes. Therefore, Spinoza delivers a view of the common good as the product of a conscious option for power-sharing, while renewing, not rejecting, the idea of a shared higher good, consisting in a good life of reason, solidarity and *acquiescentia* (Voegelin 1999: 126–32). Spinoza's approach carries the seeds for a comparative view of the modern fundaments of political association. It is particularly suitable to an analysis of multiple modernities, since it is not based, like Hobbes's model, on the idea of a metamorphosed Christian myth as the basis of the modern polity but draws from a variety of sources.

The socio-political conditions and intellectual environments that favoured the emergence of the radical views of Spinoza and of other thinkers variably inspired by him took form in Western Europe during a period of intense socio-political and economic transformations and political–military rivalry with the Ottoman Empire. Yet the broader theoretical framework of this specific type of Enlightenment, and the axial traditions from which its most advanced versions were derived, were the product of a longer-term intercivilisational exchange nurtured by bloody and genocidal conflicts, as in the epilogue of the Spanish Christian *reconquista* that is at the root of Spinoza's diasporic displacement. This displacement facilitated his drawing from a variety of traditions and their combination into an original perspective. In particular for Spinoza, religion, properly understood, is ethical speech, an axial discourse that formulates shared values in order for human powers to create rules of connective justice and to support stable socio-political orders. The influence of the Islamic philosophy's idea of prophecy is here unmistakable. Spinoza contended that the authority used in this conversation is legitimate if it adheres to the ethical frame of religious discourse and does not degenerate into the manipulative activity of stirring up wrong beliefs, which he calls superstition and which can be the source of fanaticism. Spinoza's rejection of priesthood in all religions was due to his conviction

that this form of consecration of authority fosters superstition. Prophecy, on the other hand, is to be taken seriously in that it 'really includes ordinary knowledge' (Spinoza [1670] 1951: 13). Here we find another clear echo of the approach of the Islamic philosophers. In his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* Spinoza attempted to show – echoing the Islamic Muʿtazila thinkers and philosophers like Ibn Sina – that scriptures (*pace* all theologians) are not about any speculative knowledge of God or his attributes. Prophetic discourse, nourished by imagination, was not speculative but parabolic and enigmatic, dense of bodily language, and finalised to admonish commoners to right behaviour and the observance of divine law. In this way the prophets communicated the imperatives of piety and justice to the masses.

Conclusion

Facilitated by a critical exploration of the ambivalent resources of Western thought, I have proposed a transculturally open analysis of tradition and modernity's entwining and intertwining. I have then historically situated the case of Islam's entanglement with tradition and modernity, before providing examples of how the Western modern transformation favoured both Eurocentric views of modernity and encouraged more open visions, which can fit a framework of multiple modernities.

In particular, I have attempted to lighten up the theoretical burden of modern Western, sociologically reductive views of 'religion' as applicable to Islam. On the other hand, I have emphasised the fact that it was exactly the dynamics of radicalisation of Western religious movements that has laid the basis, simultaneously, for political modernity and for religious and political fundamentalism (or for what Voegelin called 'political religions'). In this sense, the fundamentalism of 'political religions' is a genuinely modern – and predominantly Western – phenomenon (Voegelin 1998: 131–214).

In contrast to the radicalisation, in the Western path, of the antinomy of innerwordliness and publicness, of culture and power, of the autonomy of the subject and the sovereignty of the state, I have emphasised instead the more flexible capacity of distinction and amalgamation that the discursive traditions of Islam – enlivening a composite civilisation that Hodgson called 'Islamdom' – have retained at the passage from an epoch of political expansion and cultural florescence, through the era of ecumenical renaissance and early modernity, to an epoch of subordination and resistance to an encroaching Western colonial modernity. In particular, the synthesis of Jewish prophecy and Greek science-*cum*-philosophy performed by Muslim traditions remains over the long term a key trait of their outlook and of the potential resources for their further development, differentiation and hybridisation with other traditions under modern conditions.

Summary of chapter

A major assumption running through the social-science literature, from the founding fathers onwards, has been that modernity occurred only once, in the West, because of specific conditions that did not exist in other civilisations. The latter, including Islam, were implicitly characterised by the absence of one or more crucial features. According to this approach, non-Western civilisations could at best achieve modernity through its introduction from outside. More recent theoretical work has questioned both this assumption of the uniqueness of the West and the corresponding conception of modernity as singular. Informed by these theoretical advances, this chapter takes a new look at modernity and at what precedes it or inhibits its emergence: tradition or traditions. The latter have often been considered, from the viewpoint of Western modernity, as little more than remnants of earlier societies and cultures, which would have to be either absorbed or destroyed in the course of modernisation.

In this perspective, the relation between Islam and modernity can be only one of deficiencies (measured by Islam's alleged insufficient capacity to supersede traditions), dependencies (on Western modernity) and idiosyncracies (in terms of distorted outcomes of a dependent modernisation). Questions such as *What Went Wrong?* with Islamic civilisation vis-à-vis the modern world hegemonised by the West inevitably come up as a result of static and unilateral views of tradition and modernity and their relations.

The attempt to overcome an approach dominated by the measurement of deficiencies, dependencies and idiosyncracies is aided by a conception of civilisations as unique constellations of culture and power, in which a tradition is the dynamic cultural dimension of a civilisation. This definition helps overcoming Eurocentrism and allows us to conceive of different pathways to modernity in the form of multiple modernities. Facilitated by the findings of historians and social scientists who have demonstrated the dynamism of Islamic civilisation well into the modern era, the chapter points out the distinctive factors of strength of Islamic civilisation, alongside features that in the historical process turned out to be weaknesses vis-à-vis the encroaching West. Its (relative) strength consisted in more inclusive patterns of trans-civilisational encounters and networking, and its (relative) weakness lay in a limited capacity to enable the autonomy of the political process vis-à-vis traditional authorities, and as a corollary to legitimize the unlimited sovereignty of the modern state.

Questions

1. What is the relation between modernity, understood as a socio-political order based on differentiated rationalities (most notably, between politics and religion), and the world of cultural and religious traditions?
2. In which ways does the concept of tradition expounded in this chapter differ from the previously widespread perception of traditions as backward looking and as barriers to social and cultural change?
3. What is the contribution of Axial Age theory to an understanding of power configurations in post-axial civilisations? What does this mean for the claim, made by some scholars, that Islam is not secularisable?
4. What does the author mean when he writes that Islam marks the triumph of the commoner? What does this imply for the position of religious elites in Islam? How is it related to the salience of Sufism?

5. What is distinctive to the Western articulation of modernity vis-à-vis tradition?
6. Is it possible to conceive of Islamic civilisation as specifically characterised by the strength of its tradition, and, if so, why?
7. To what extent is a peculiarly restrictive definition of religion responsible for the specific outcome of Western modernity?
8. Can we speak of an Islamic modernity in spite of the enduring patterns of dependency of the Muslim world on Western power and culture?

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CHAPTER 2

Western Scholars of Islam on the Issue of Modernity

Muhammad Khalid Masud and Armando Salvatore

Western standards in the study of Islam and modernity

This chapter reviews the approaches of selected Western scholars who have analysed Muslim encounters with modernity. It situates them against the background of the modern entanglements between the West and the Muslim world reconstructed in Chapter 1 of this volume. In particular, it focuses on three main standards employed by Western scholars in order to explore the issue of Islam and modernity: the general level of compatibility of Islam with an essentially and/or universally defined modernity, the comparability of Islam with Christianity from the perspective of a notion of religion largely drawn from the Western trajectory – and therefore laying a particular stress on the Protestant Reformation – and the relation of authenticity and modernity (or maybe better, as we will see, the authentication of modernity) with regard to Islam.

From the insight offered in Chapter 1 into the issue of Islam and modernity it follows that such standards invite essentialisation of both modernity and Islam and are therefore situated at a level of generalisation that cannot take into account the more nuanced perspective that has been opened up by the paradigm of multiple modernities. This shorter chapter in turn provides specific insights into recurring patterns of Western appraisal of Islam vis-à-vis modernity that were cumulatively built over time across various disciplines and schools of thought and retain some influence at a variety of levels, from scholarship to the media. Even more importantly, the focus on such standards of assessment facilitates understanding the major turn that came to full maturation between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s through the crisis of modernisation theory and the opening of horizons of analysis of multiple modernities. By challenging those standards in parallel with a mounting critique of Orientalist scholarship, this breakthrough has opened up new avenues of debate variously intertwined with the key approach of multiple modernities. While in Chapter 1 we have detailed the circumstances that promoted, within Western scholarship, specific notions of tradition, religion and civilisation along with their twisted application to Islam, here we will deal more directly with the standards that have resulted from the scholarly endeavours finalised to explore the extent to which Islam came to some extent close – or was at least comparable with – Western

patterns of rationalisation of society and universalisation of values, but did not bring about the same type of achievements.

As put by Albert Hourani (1980: 71), the assessment of Islam has always presented a particularly critical challenge to Western scholars and thinkers because of the 'peculiar difficulty . . . in finding a category in terms of which Islam can be understood, being neither "East" nor "West", neither Christian nor unequivocally non-Christian'.

The branches of academic scholarship that happened to deal – at times almost obsessively – with the subtle issue of Islam's otherness versus closeness from a Western viewpoint saw the light during the nineteenth century in coincidence with the European colonial encroachment upon the Muslim world. They became subject to profound changes during the twentieth century, mainly as a consequence of the two world wars and of the ensuing processes of decolonisation, which produced serious breaches in the self-understanding of the formerly triumphant Western civilisation. However, it should be remembered that this trajectory was also influenced by earlier views of Islam that had been shaped and propagated by leading European thinkers who were not academic specialists of Islam but who contributed to shaping the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment intellectual developments, such as Hume, Voltaire, Goethe, Herder, Hegel and even Nietzsche, to name just a few.

A whole family of dichotomies opposed a progressive West to a stagnant world of Islam: for example, in terms of reason versus blindly following authority, science versus revelation, secularism versus religion, materialism versus spiritualism, humanism versus religiosity, immanence versus transcendentalism and market capitalism versus totalitarianism. The articulation of such dichotomies was not always and necessarily crude and devoid of nuances. Islam was certainly the villain in most cases, but sometimes also happened to become the screen upon which a Western nostalgia for a lost world of tradition and spirituality was projected.

The general patterns

The history of Islamic Studies in the West shows that following the Enlightenment a need arose for a new approach to religion that would transcend the earlier prevailing theological disputes. New perspectives allowed the study of other religions as manifestations of a common humanity. Islam became part of the history of religions, and the focus was gradually shifted from theology to phenomenology. Muhammad was studied as a natural, rational human being. For sure, polemics about Islam continued well into the nineteenth century in the missionary writings and in numerous debates between Western scholars (who sometimes doubled their identity as colonial administrators) and local religious leaders. For instance, the Orientalist and high-ranking administrator in colonial

India William Muir (1819–1905) regarded Islam as a missionary religion and thus as a threat to Christian evangelism, while, in a debate with the German Islamologist and Heidelberg professor Carl H. Becker (1876–1933), the leading evangelical theologian Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), a friend of Max Weber, denied that Islam had substantially contributed to the development of Western universalism. Following that debate, Carl H. Becker moved from a comparative mode that had become common across a variety of disciplines during the nineteenth century towards one that focused sharply on the opposition between Islam's incarnation of Oriental despotism and Western civility (Stauth 1993: 154–8).

Such a scheme solidified a dichotomising pattern defining civilisational identity versus alterity, which Western Europe had developed in the course of its long and troubled transition from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment to twentieth-century mass democracy. A notable twist to this view was achieved with Nietzsche, just before Weber embarked on his comparative project in the sociology of religion. The controversial but deeply influential German philosopher viewed Islam as the positive term of the dichotomy for impersonating a proud, masculine principle in opposition to the life-repressing resentment embodied by Christianity and even more by the Protestant Reformation (Turner 1994: 96–9).

Both the reiteration and the twisting of standards of identity and alterity that link the West to Islam provide a significant nexus between the nineteenth-century scholarship on Islam and the new questions that took shape at the beginning of the twentieth century under the influence of sociology. The formulation of patterns of sameness and difference in Western views of Islam reached a climax with the work of Max Weber, which in turn led to an institutionalisation of Western values of inwardness as the crucial parameter for a universalisation of the innerworldliness of modernity (see Chapter 1 of this volume). Weber focused in a more pointed way than previous Orientalists on the dialectic between religious values and social institutions that ushers in an antinomy between despotism and patrimonialism, on the one hand, and civility and autonomy, on the other (Salvatore 1997: 97–110). However, neither the ubiquitous dichotomising dimension of the Western view of Islam nor its relation to religion was always clear in the various analyses. A basic diversity in the articulation of religion across various civilisations was often ignored. The outcome was an essentialisation of Islam as well as of Christianity, with which it was explicitly or implicitly compared (see Chapter 1 in this volume).

It is important to consider that this essentialisation was still well entrenched by the 1970s, in spite of the sometimes articulate, though mostly ambivalent, ways of approaching Islam that were the heritage of nineteenth-century studies and debates. This legacy comprised religious studies that ranged from phenomenological to critical analyses of scriptures, rituals and doctrines.

Islam was in principle also subjected to similar scrutiny. However, points of comparison were defined in terms of Christian experiences because it was perceived that 'Islam today stands just about where Christendom stood in the fifteenth century' (Stoddard 1921: 33). A leading twentieth-century Orientalist like Hamilton R. A. Gibb (1895–1971) was aware of the legacy of such comparative studies and was attracted by such similarities, as he stated quite explicitly that his view of Islam could only be the counterpart of Christian experiences (Gibb 1947: p. xi). Key concerns in this framework of comparative religion have been the distinction between the sacred and the profane and the separation of religion from politics. Rather than exploring in some depth the opacity of this distinction in Islam, it was taken for granted as a negative aspect, a deficit, and as a hindrance to modernisation, intended as a process of differentiation of social fields and their value spheres. Muhammad's life in Medina attracted scholars more than that in Mecca: jihad, conquest and the focus on state power (considered in the shape of patrimonialism, that is, of the ruler's identification of his government prerogatives with the administration of a personal patrimony) were regarded as negative fall-outs of this type of religiosity.

In his analysis Gibb emphasised a tension in Muslim religious thought between transcendentalism and immanentism. He aligned to this view a series of interpretations, among which the following are particularly relevant, also in view of the analyses that will be presented in various chapters of this book: the Qur'an, official Islamic theology and law always stress transcendentalism (see Chapter 1 in this volume); the Sufis, on the other hand, are inclined to immanentism (see Chapters 1 and 5 in this volume); the incipient rationalism of the ninth-century theologians of the Mu'tazila (see Chapter 9 in this volume), who were influenced by Greek and Hellenistic philosophy, was defeated not on the basis of logic but because of the adherence of the masses to the truths of the Qur'an. In other words, according to Gibb (1947: 19), the Muslim theology of transcendence marginalised personal devotion, while Sufism stressed a direct communication with God. Clearly, the polarisation between two forms of Islam was greatly exaggerated, and their tight dialectic, when not complementarity, was often overlooked, by applying categories deeply entrenched in the Western historic experiences that exalted the centrality of inwardness (see Chapter 1 in this volume).

Between Orientalist Islamologists and modernisation theorists

We have seen that the question whether Islam is compatible with modernity arose in the specific context in which the Western scrutiny and, often, critique of Islam's deficits developed from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Western

scholars were nevertheless divided on the question whether Muslim societies can be modernised. One group maintained that 'Islam is in its very nature incapable of reform and progressive adaptation to the expansion of human knowledge' (Stoddard 1921: 33). In their view, Muslim societies could not survive in the process of global change. Others believed that Muslim societies have no choice but to modernise. However, they could do so only by adopting the Western model.

A leading representative of the first approach in the academic world of the post-Second World War era was Gustave E. von Grunebaum (1909–72). His position can be considered a continuation of the view of Islam manifested by Becker, but articulated instead from a perspective that capitalised on the Weberian teachings and in particular on their rigorously comparative approach pivoted on a keen understanding of how Western uniqueness happened to become universally normative. As a result, 'he was convinced that it was his duty to interpret Islam from the point of view of the Westerner deeply steeped in his own civilisation at its best' (Rosenthal 1973: 356). On the one hand, he celebrated the Weberian approach and its underlying rationalist spirit as 'an end confined to the most modern West' (von Grunebaum 1964: 43). On the other, for him Islam was completely at the mercy of Western-led modernisation (von der Mehden 1986: 11).

With such an approach and within this methodological framework, von Grunebaun saw his task as a post-Weberian Islamologist as consisting of reinterpreting the ranking of the 'inner' factors in the unfolding of Islamic civilisation and in its allegedly unsuccessful encounter with modernity. Relying on the cultural sociologist Alfred L. Kroeber (1876–1960), he saw in the message of Islam a dilution of the inner impetus of Christian faith (von Grunebaum 1964: 7) – an idea that reflects Weber's poor consideration of Islam for allegedly being a trivialised manifestation of Near Eastern religious monotheism and spirituality, one projected outwardly towards immediate rewards rather than, like Christianity, inwardly towards a realm of pure values.

According to von Grunebaum, this specific deficit was magnified in the modern era by the fact that Islam did not undergo the process of self-renewal that the West had been through since after the Protestant Reformation. This stress on reformation often became a leitmotif in Western approaches to the issue of Islam and modernity. Based on the Western Christian trajectory, scholars anticipated a reformation in Islam as a requirement for renaissance. Consequently, the meaning of reform was limited to the pattern of Western Reformation, and the continuing reform efforts within Islamic traditions were not given enough weight. While clearly the Protestant Reformation had been the outcome of a larger cultural and political crisis in Western Europe (see Chapter 1 in this volume), such modern crises were considered by von Grunebaum to be highly productive of forms of social power. He viewed

reformation as anchored in a reform of the self facilitated by an increasing reflexivity and rationality, while he was probably more explicit than any other Western scholar of Islam in claiming that Islam's own crises lack a dialectical potential and hamper any chance of self-regeneration. He viewed Islam as trapped in a continuous reiteration of 'leap[s] from one absolute to another', because it lacked the critical filter of a reflexive subjectivity (von Grunebaum 1964: 45–6). From Hanbalism to the Muslim Brotherhood, any attempt at radical reform was seen as viciously hijacked by a rigid orientation to an almost mythical past, the era of Muhammad, his companions and his immediate successors. The result is that von Grunebaum denied to Islam any autonomous capacity for social change and intellectual renewal, seen as the preconditions for a successful encounter with modernity. He concluded that 'the pursuit of an ideal political life (early projected into the reality of the first forty years of the *hijra* . . .) in disregard of the actual political situation has become the permanent drama of Islam' (ibid.: 65).

Nonetheless, writing in the early 1960s, von Grunebaum was also aware of the vulnerability of his approach to Islam, suspended as it was both conceptually and historically between the triumph of Western uniqueness and the upcoming anti-colonial challenges. He conceded: 'It may well be that our comprehensive, or universalistic approach will loose its attraction . . . And, above all, the sustaining aspiration of our cultural community may change' (ibid.: 54). Yet for the time being he was aware that his work would 'imperceptibly but inevitably turn into source material from which those who come after us will recapture our aspirations' (ibid.: 97).

He was not wrong, since such views deeply influenced the study of Islam and Muslim societies in the post-Second World War era in spite of all post-colonial critiques, which were voiced in the 1960s, long before Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), by leading Arab intellectuals such as Anouar Abdel-Malek (1963) and Mohammed Arkoun (1964). In spite of such critiques, Islam continued to be mainly characterised as a traditional culture and Muslims as a traditional society. As a consequence, it was predicted that Islam would soon lose its relevance. Yet both other Islamologists of the time, such as Hamilton A. R. Gibb, and the social scientists affiliated with modernisation theory were able to introduce some distinctions into the broader picture.

Gibb recognised that a key problem was concealed by the ambiguous use of the terms Islam and modernity. Islam was used in at least three meanings, designating 'an organised body of religious doctrines', 'a system of social ethics and practices' and the 'entire body of its adherents' (Gibb 1970: 3). Often all the above three meanings were conflated in one statement. Similarly, Daniel Lerner (1958: 46), a leading modernisation theorist of the time, observed that an ambiguity about modernity arises when it is used with reference to non-Western societies because of its primarily Western rooting. To this, Gibb (1947: 69)

added that modernity is 'primarily a function of Western liberalism', proposed distinguishing between different religious traditions, and advised limiting 'the term "modernity" to those who do care, and sometimes care deeply, about their religion but who are, in various degrees, offended by the traditional dogmatism' (ibid.: 52).

As predicted by von Grunebaum, after an intermediate phase during which Orientalists were offering key inputs to modernisation theorists, the latter took over the challenge to approach the ongoing processes in the Muslim world in partly new terms. They took into account the above distinctions and inserted even the purported factors of blockage of Islam as a tradition in the context of a dynamic process of modernisation, which Muslim societies could, accordingly, not escape and to some extent could be able actively to steer through. Whereas Islamologists such as von Grunebaum were inclined to deny to Islam any chance of modernisation, especially in the sense of intellectual renaissance and political development, the new modernisation theorists often identified Islam as a 'tradition' inhibiting modernisation processes and political transformations (see Chapter 1 of this volume) rather than considering Muslim societies *per se* as unmodernisable. After all, the overall picture in the dawning post-colonial era was characterised by the dynamism of new social forces and political regimes stretching across a growing part of the Muslim world. In this context, modernisation theorists proclaimed that Islam was playing a negative or residual role as a tradition and was condemned to extinction in the ongoing, ineluctable modernisation process that, though at its infancy, was starting to unsettle the traditional balances of Muslim societies. The body of Muslim societies themselves was instead considered potentially exempt from the hampering effects of tradition.

It is important to notice that many among the leading modernisation theorists were not trained in local languages and therefore had still to rely on Orientalist bodies of knowledge and their expertise role. The Islam of Lerner was still, basically, the Islam of von Grunebaum. The difference consisted in the fact that Lerner saw social actors and factors at work that were not dependent on an all-encompassing Islamic traditional culture but could potentially resist and change it. He could, therefore, express a markedly more optimistic view than his Orientalist colleagues: 'Traditional society is passing from the Middle East because relatively few Middle Easterners still want to live by its rules' (Lerner 1958: 399). The older hermeneutics of Islam was now encapsulated in a web of dynamic social factors. The text is no longer king: social surveys are at the core of the new methods of investigation. Islam now only turns negative and residual, to the extent that it stands for discrete traditional factors preventing innovation: this hampering factor called tradition is often given a specific weight within the grid of questions asked by the social scientists to the social actors within countries considered on the way to modernisation.

Yet, within this dynamic approach, Islam is no longer viewed as a purely static tradition but as an active, yet losing party in a titanic battle with the forces of modernity, a battle that is internal to Muslim societies. Accordingly, the view of Islam as a series of gaps which was well rooted in Weber's approach was confirmed by Orientalists such as von Grunebaum and Gibb, who wrote that 'Islam presents a classical example of an entirely self-sufficient, self-enclosed and inbred culture' (Gibb 1970: 4). As shown by another leading representative of modernisation theory, Manfred Halpern (1963: 34), the new approach needed not to reject the Orientalist view but rather to turn it around by asking the following key question with regard to Islam and modernity: 'Can any closed system like Islam be made to mesh with an open and dynamically changed society, yet succeed in remaining a closed system?' The model of the Western articulation of the issue of Islam's relation to modernity shifted from diagnosis to therapy: Islam was ever more clearly the illness, but a viciously active one, while the body of Muslim societies could still be healed.

It is here that Islam, as an allegedly closed system rooted in a tradition obstructing modernisation, begins to be assessed in more nuanced ways than had been the case with von Grunebaum. According to Halpern, the Muslim as a social actor is not completely paralysed by the legacy represented by Islamic traditions. It is evident that Muslims are on the move in post-colonial society. Ergo, there must be something they inherited from the past that bestows on them 'an uncommonly flexible style for dealing with a world in motion' (ibid.). Yet, while Islam's negativity vis-à-vis modernity is reframed in order to allow for some dynamism, the process and its predictable outcome amount to a gradual collapse of Islam, because 'the road to modernisation for all societies involves a march without a final prophet, a final book, or even assurance of final success' (ibid.: 35). Relying on this approach, Halpern was convinced that modernisation, though originating in standards set by Western society and history, 'has become a native movement' (ibid.: 36). Islam cannot choose: it has to cope with modernity and make space for it.

Halpern predicted that neither Islamic reformism nor Islamic fundamentalism (which he dubbed 'neo-totalitarianism') would be able to survive the modernisation process. In spite of their attempts to cope with it, the Islamic forces were seen as playing a basically negative role. He considered the Muslim Brothers doomed to failure, not only 'a symptom of uprootedness', but one that 'cannot accept modern uprootedness as the precondition of modern liberation' (Halpern 1963: 138). It is also by virtue of such useless battles that Islam itself becomes increasingly irrelevant, yet this happens through movement and challenge, not via a reiteration of stale formulas. For sure, a secular leadership was now seen as triumphing and with it 'the battle . . . moved from the realm of religion into the realm of politics' (ibid.: 129). The presence of Islam on this political battlefield was perceived as the symptom of the pathological traits of

modernisation in Muslim lands. Yet some Islamic ideals can not only survive modernisation but can even contribute to it, if detached from the traditional system to which they originally belonged: 'the insistence on the allowed consensus is itself becoming a force of change as the pressure for conformity comes no longer from one's ancestors but from one's peers' (ibid.: 132).

Clearly, the specific trajectory of conceptualisation of religion in the West in response to the developments that instituted the state's sovereignty over the entire society and the delimitation of a specific 'religious field' significantly influenced the approaches here analysed (see Chapter 1 in this volume). Clues of processes through which Islam appeared as not fitting the normative presuppositions of the Western trajectory have often provided the occasion to see any resurgence of religion as 'an obstacle to the achievement of modernisation' and 'a hindrance to progress' (von der Mehden 1986: 6). On the other hand, as Lerner (1958: 399) explained, modernisation is not ultimately tied to Western patterns: it is global. Lerner found the same basic model reappearing everywhere, regardless of variation in culture and faith, based on the evidence that, even when some post-colonial leaders of Muslim countries denounced the West's neo-colonial political manoeuvres, their model remained modernity: originating in the West but increasingly globalising itself. 'Mecca or mechanisation', the Middle East may choose either world, but not both together (ibid.: 406). Not surprisingly, Lerner pointed to Turkey as 'the bright model of successful transition' from tradition to modernity (ibid.: 409). He approvingly quoted Gibb's admiration for the Turks because of their 'intellectual honesty' based on the fact that they 'know what it is that they want': a recognition of proactive social agency, the key to a successful modernisation (ibid.: 410).

The reasons why Muslim societies were quick to adopt modern technologies and institutions of governance but, in spite of Lerner's predictions, often continued to stress the preservation of tradition were not fully explored. Gibb (1970: 6) agreed that 'the fact of this persistence of the traditional Middle Eastern social institutions, as preserved and colored by the principles and forms of Islam, is often overlooked'. But according to him this was due to the fact that Islam's 'traditional formulations necessarily include certain elements of reasoning which are based on intellectual concepts no longer accepted', while 'for the majority of Muslims the old frames of reference have remained completely adequate' (ibid.: 3–4). Clearly, at the passage from Orientalist Islamologists such as von Grunebaum and Gibb to modernisation theorists such as Lerner and Halpern, the reduction of tradition to a stage of (under)development was still a hindrance to elaborating a notion of tradition as a framework facilitating social agency.

A realisation of the changes and adjustments that a tradition makes continuously in order to stress a semblance of permanence was still to come and could take shape only after the collapse of modernisation theory (see Chapter 1 in this volume). Yet other social scientists, such as the anthropologist Clifford Geertz

(1926–2006), recognised the positive role that religion can play as 'one of the major mechanisms by means of which particular local cultures have projected themselves onto a larger world screen throughout the course of history' (Geertz 2001: 2). Developing this approach from the 1960s till the end of the twentieth century, Geertz illustrated it with examples from diverse Muslim societies across the world, from Morocco to Indonesia, which have continuously reconstructed their local identities and, still, remained part of a larger global Muslim community by means of religious attachments.

From the assessment of Islamic modernism to the dispute about Islamic modernity

Muslim theologies of modernity could have been adduced as examples of a positive role of tradition and religion in social development and intellectual progress (see Chapter 9 in this volume). Yet a more reductive label came to cover such endeavours in the perception of Western scholars of Islam: 'Islamic modernism' happened to be used to characterise various intellectual attempts, mostly of a reformist type, to develop a viable framework of thought for Islam in the modern era, in what amounts to an attempt proactively to cope with Western modernity. Within Western scholarship the concept itself of 'Islamic modernism' took on a derogatory shade under the imputation of a likely, if not fatal, failure of the attempt, for all the background reasons related to Islam's nature as a tradition examined above.

Western scholars had serious problems in acknowledging the specificities of Islamic modern intellectual thought. Modernism in Muslim societies was analysed as a general category only through the lens of the more general view that modernity originated outside the social purview of Muslims, and Islam could not cope with it. Only more recently, in the framework of new debates on the hypothesis of an endogenous genesis of modernity in the Muslim world, has Islamic modernism come to be seen as *sui generis* rather than belonging to a general, necessarily Western-centred, category. We will explore both the assessment of Islamic modernism and the dispute on Islamic modernity, while trying to show their nexus.

As a general category, the concept of 'modernism' with regard to nineteenth- and twentieth-century Islamic thought denotes an attempt to free the religion of Islam from the shackles of a too rigid orthodoxy, and to accomplish reforms that will render it adaptable to modern life and its complex demands (Adams 1933: 177). According to Gibb, modernism is predominantly a movement of thought among 'educated laymen'. Yet according to him the Islamic modernist differs from the conservative, on a theological level, only in building up a Muslim apologetics along somewhat superficial lines, finalised to reach an educated public (Gibb 1947: 48). Accordingly, Islamic modernism lacks the discipline

of controlled thinking and loses itself in subjective endeavours to overcome the present state of weakness of Islam by referring to modern categories of thought and action without penetrating and absorbing their fundamental values and norms. Based on this interpretation, the weakness of the modernist approach is evident in a continuous strain between the outward argument and the inner train of reasoning.

Alternative interpretations are provided in Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 in this volume. The goal here is to point out the way some nuances were introduced in the debate and how in spite of them the general category of 'Islamic modernism' with its negative connotation held through. A key distinction between Egyptian and Indian modernism was recognised quite early by Charles Adams. Referring to the older Orientalist Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), he claimed that Egyptian modernism was primarily a cultural movement aiming to adjust Islam to the conditions of modern European civilisation (Adams 1933: 102–3), which would seem to justify, at least on a first reading, Gibb's negative judgement. It was Gibb himself (1947: 53) who observed that Indian modernism instead aimed 'to re-examine the foundations of belief'. He regarded in particular Sayyid Ahmad Khan's emphasis on the necessity of theology to conform to nature and reject miracles as a genuine form of rationalism (see Chapters 9 and 10 in this volume). Notwithstanding this key observation, Gibb found Indian modernism more politically oriented than the manifestations of modernism in the Arab world and therefore saw them as still trapped in the same type of circular and sterile, merely adaptive argument (ibid.: 58).

Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916–2000) agreed with Gibb about the fact that political compulsion facilitated the acceptance of some core modern ideas like nationalism. He stated that 'the modern Muslim world has accepted and espoused with fervor those aspects of nationalism that are relevant or contributory to the historical rehabilitation of Islamic society, and compatible with Islam's central precepts' (Smith 1957: 85). However, as Gibb (1947: 58) remarked, 'the modernists are unable to place facts in compelling and clear perspectives, because they have not yet formulated to themselves a coherent social ideal adapted to the needs of Muslims generally'. They were thought to be trapped within the logic of Qur'an's exegesis and therefore hampered in developing critical thinking and a scientific approach to history. Gibb explained this allegedly grave stalemate by evidencing the crucial role that Muslim theologians had played in reshaping Islamic thought. He defined the goal of theology as 'to state the truths of religion (which are, so far, only intuitionally known) in terms of the highest intellectual concepts of the time' (ibid.: 18). The main difference between the Muslim world and the West in the exercise of this role is that the ulama, whom he considered the authentic Muslim theologians, never absorbed the secular and modern categories of Western thought. Consequently, while Western theologians were reformulating religious doctrines in parallel with

the unfolding processes of modernisation and secularisation, Muslim theology led itself to logical extremism and eventually became divorced from the faith and practices of the masses. While average Muslims managed to stay afloat by keeping somewhere in the middle of the road, Islamic modernists were not fully able to break out of this impasse (ibid.: 47).

Following Gibb, Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1957: 85) was bitterly critical of the apologetic nature of modernist writings, which according to him was at the root of the frustration of Western scholars in their attempt to appreciate the originality of modern Islam and which also damaged the capacity of Muslims seriously to cope with the multifaceted dimension of religion within modern contexts. According to him, this defensive approach diverted the attention of contemporary Muslim thinkers from their 'original task', namely, pursuing the truth and solving problems (ibid.: 87). Such derogatory views of Islamic modernism as marred by an apologetic attitude cannot be taken at face value. The question is: What is being defended? And to whom is this apology addressed? While Smith has no doubt that the bulk of the modernist literature that he deems apologetic is addressed to the West, it is far from clear why Muslim modernists would be so apologetic, when such apology is considered entirely irrelevant by their Western counterpart. A modernist thinker probably finds it more purposeful to argue with a conservative who does not believe that Islam is compatible with modernity. By referring to the elements of the Islamic traditions that are mutually agreeable, he can make a point to the orthodox. As far as the defence of Islam against Christian challenges and Western criticism is concerned, it is undertaken by both conservative and modernist thinkers and it is not necessarily defensive, since it is mostly corrective and explicative. Apology to the West is instead meaningless, because the West does not regard modernist thinkers as the spokespersons for Islam. Islamic modernist literature is, in fact, part of an ongoing discourse between different Muslim groups. The conservatives are defending their traditions against the Christian missionaries, the secularists, the doubting Westernised Muslims, the reformers and the modernists. They are bitterly opposed to Islamic modernists like Sayyid Ahmad Khan who, according to them, have deviated from Islam under Western influence. Any apologetic attitude on the part of the modernists is similarly in the first place directed towards Muslim conservatives, as well as towards Westernised Muslims. Addressing the conservative, the Islamic modernist is defending the authenticity of his interpretation of Islam, and to the Westernised Muslim he is justifying his view that that modernity is achievable while remaining Muslim.

Gibb's discussion of Islamic modernism concerns precisely this point. He acknowledges that the outward target of Muslim apologetes is Christianity rather than the West as a whole, while in fact they wish to address those Muslims who are doubtful about the benefits of modernity (Gibb 1947: 53). On the other hand, the conservative theologians from among the ulama ranks are well aware

that they are defending something essential, but they do not know what exactly they are defending it against. According to Gibb, they know the object of their defence only through the distorting glasses of modernist apologetics. The real problem for Gibb is that the purported apologists of Islam do not know what Islam really is. Evidently, authenticity and, more precisely, the authentication of true Islam are particularly dear to Orientalists, and some of them think that the issue cannot be left to Muslim thinkers alone. Starting from this consideration, Gibb undertakes a quite imaginative reconstruction, along liberal lines, of what he passionately believes to be the original teachings of Islam. This argument, however, quite soon becomes circular: the ulama do not see any problem with the Islamic traditions and therefore do not respond to challenges of modernity; therefore, the true representatives of Islam are not responding to modernity; those who are responding to modern challenges are apologetic while they do not know about the original teachings of Islam; hence their response is not Islamic: the result in both cases is that Islam cannot accommodate modernity.

The derogatory characterisation of Islamic modernism by leading Orientalists as apologetic is a symptom of the fact that the issue of authenticity is more of a dilemma for the West than it is for Islam. The question about who speaks on behalf of Islam is very crucial to Western scholars. For most of them, the legitimate speakers are undoubtedly the conservative ulama. Modernisation theorists often helped the Orientalists in stating that contemporary Muslim intellectuals who do not belong to the ulama ranks and Islamic modernists cannot play that authentically Islamic role because they are 'shaped in the Western thought and valuation' (Lerner 1958: 408). Yet they are not fully Western either: 'Their categories of thought are those of the modern West. But their modes of feeling are more equivocal, more accessible to solicitation from different sides' (ibid.). This is why they are finally responsible for 'voluminous outpouring of Islamic apologetics' (ibid.: 409). Not surprisingly, Lerner invokes the authority of leading Orientalists like Smith in remarking that 'the intellectual's intellect [is] quite sold out to the blind emotional fury of nostalgic mob' and von Grunebaum for foreseeing that, the more the process is pushed forward, the more the Muslim intellectual 'will be forced to build a "modern" house on fictitious traditionalist foundations' (ibid.).

Even by crossing the conceptual and methodological threshold separating Orientalist Islamologists from modernisation theorists, it is still difficult for Western scholarship to explain how the house of modernity can be built on other than Western foundations. To these scholars the Islamic modernists' ambivalence towards the West was deeply problematic. This bias and the argumentative aporias it produced prevents Western scholars from appreciating the contribution of Islamic modernism to the issue of the encounter between Islam and modernity. How can one admire and oppose the West at the same time? Islamic modernists do not find it impossible, because they do not regard either Islam or modernity as so comprehensive as Western scholars mostly do.

Notwithstanding this widespread criticism, some scholars have found Islamic modernism and their arguments agreeable. Referring to the Mu'tazila and writing right after the First World War (around the time when Weber finalised his comparative sociology of religion), the political scientist and popular author Theodore Lothrop Stoddard had earlier underscored that 'Islam had been never quite destitute of liberal minds' (Stoddard 1921: 36) and that 'the reforming spirit has already produced profound changes throughout Islam' (ibid.: 44). According to him, Islam was not simply coping with the West but was on its way to develop 'a new synthesis' (ibid.: 90).

Not surprisingly, a comprehensive appreciation of Islamic modern thought that reformulates and attempts to substantiate this more positive assessment took shape only after the demise of modernisation theory. It was launched via key scholarly interventions by younger Islamologists and historians of Islam. Their new approach has changed the terms of the debate quite radically. The object of analysis is no longer simply the capacity of Muslim intellectuals to cope innovatively with Western modernity by selectively drawing on Muslim traditions, but the more fundamental hypothesis that patterns of intellectual modernity, tied to specific structural developments within capitalist production and markets, developed within the Muslim world prior to any confrontation with an encroaching Western modernity. The strands of Islamic modernism originating in the nineteenth century should accordingly not be considered the mere reflex of a sudden imperative to respond to the West (whether in an apologetic or in more original and synthetic terms) but the outcome of a longer process, which was deeply affected by the increasing political and cultural impact of the West on the Muslim world in the colonial era but was set in motion much earlier by at least partly endogenous developments.

Predictably, the two scholars who developed an argument about the endogenous seeds of modernity within the Muslim world, Peter Gran and Reinhard Schulze, chose to tackle the weakest point of the Orientalist argument about the decline of the Muslim world in the modern era prior to the advance of the West on Muslim lands. They challenged head-on the 'Napoleon theorem', that is, the idea that the issue of modernity was brought to the heart of the Muslim world by Napoleon's occupation of Egypt and parts of the Near East at the end of the eighteenth century. The main point of convergence between their works is the intention to demonstrate the existence of lively and innovative, bourgeois-like intellectual cultures, mostly tied to some Sufi brotherhoods. According to them such intellectual cultures emerged and flourished in key areas of the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century, prior to the hard colonial impact of the West. They reflected commercial and capitalist interests and revealed a new, genuinely modern emphasis on social autonomy and responsibility (Gran 1979, 1998; Schulze 1990, 1996).

It is not surprising that the challenge launched by Gran and Schulze elicited

sharp responses by contemporary representatives of more established forms of Orientalist scholarship. From the pages of scholarly journals devoted to the study of the Middle East and the Muslim world two Dutch-based scholars, Fred De Jong (1982) and Bernd Radtke (1994), responded to Gran and Schulze and attempted to deconstruct their argument by showing that they had read their own pre-constituted ideas of Islamic modernity into eighteenth-century texts that were nothing other than a rehash of older themes. Not surprisingly, in both cases Gran and Schulze responded to this criticism by basically stressing that the analysis of texts can be meaningful only if situated in the context of wider socio-political processes of transformation, so that even older arguments and keywords can acquire new significations in new contexts. From this point of view the Islamic eighteenth century, far from being the stagnant counterpart to a flourishing European Enlightenment, might still have been far from expressing an 'Islamic Enlightenment', yet it manifested important innovative dynamics that deserve the attention of Islamologists and historians of Islam, who might otherwise, by exclusively looking at texts, remain trapped in their biased and simplified notions of what is tradition and what is modernity. Most seriously, by insisting in neglecting the socio-political context they might lose any significant capacity to keep pace with more general debates about the dynamics of tradition and the singularity and plurality of modernity (see Chapter 1 of this volume).

Conclusion

The significance of Gran's and Schulze's challenge consists less in who is right and who is wrong in reading and interpreting certain texts than in its ushering in of a new stage in the debate among Western scholars about the issue of Islam and modernity. The trajectory of the way this issue was dealt with from the nineteenth-century institutionalisation of Western scholarship of Islam until the 1970s was far from stagnant, yet it revolved, at times obsessively, around the key theme of Islam's inherent deficits in coping with a modernity considered to be, at least initially, an exclusively Western phenomenon. From the late 1970s until our days, a major shift prefigured the possibility of interpreting the issue of Islam and modernity less as an oxymoron that requires adaptations and responses than as a theme in its own right, which is inherent in the history of Islam and in its strained relations with the West, both before and after the onset of modern colonialism.

Summary of chapter

There are recurring themes and standards in the dealing with the issue of Islam and modernity by Western thinkers and scholars, from the nineteenth century till our days. Most prominent among them are the limited compatibility of Islam with modernity, the

comparability of Islam with Christianity and in particular with the trajectory of the Protestant Reformation, and the relation of authenticity and modernity with regard to Islam and specifically to its legitimate cultural elites.

A particularly significant momentum in the articulation of these standards is provided by the passage from Orientalist interpretations of Islam to the analysis of Muslim societies by modernisation theorists between the 1950s and the 1970s. Among the most prominent Orientalists of the time, Gustave E. von Grunebaum and Hamilton R. A. Gibb were the most outspoken in articulating a diagnosis of Islam's relation to modernity. Within the field of modernisation theory, the analyses of Daniel Lerner and Manfred Halpern were particularly interesting for adopting Orientalist views of Islam vis-à-vis modernity and transforming them according to the expectations commanded by their theoretical approach. Where the Orientalists were convinced of the fact that Islam as a comprehensive, backward-looking traditional culture constituted an obstacle for Muslims' efforts to cope with modernity, the modernisation theorists turned the argument around and proposed that Islam inspired social forces engaged in a fierce battle with an emerging secular leadership. Within this dynamic picture, Islam itself appeared as more ambivalently positioned towards modernity than shown by earlier analysis: while modernisation theorists predicted the demise of Islamist forces, they also hypothesised that some elements of Islamic traditions could enliven the forces of change.

Another important field for exploring Western scholars' view of Islam with regard to modernity is the assessment of Islamic modernism. They dubbed as Islamic modernists those Muslim leaders and thinkers who advocated modern changes within an Islamic framework. Western Orientalists considered the Islamic modernists neither modern enough, for their themes were allegedly drawn from the Western experience of modernity, nor as representing the authentic Islam, which was, according to them, the preserve of conservative ulama.

The terms of the debate changed when a new wave of scholarship in the late 1970s started radically to reframe the issue of Islam's relation to modernity and showed key elements of innovative social activities and thought within the Muslim societies of the eighteenth century, prior to their impact with the forces of Western colonial modernity. This thesis was aimed to disarticulate at its fundaments the argument of both Orientalists and modernisation theorists according to which modernity comes to Islam only from the West. While this interpretation remains controversial to our days, it has contributed to opening up the analysis of Islam and modernity by critically reconsidering all older standards and themes and so bringing it closer to the framework of multiple modernities analysed in Chapter 1.

Questions

1. To what extent was the Western scholarship on Islam's relations to modernity influenced by more general currents of Western thought?
2. How did it change from the nineteenth to the twentieth century? What was the specific role played by Weber's comparative sociology of religion?
3. To what extent were the Orientalists of the post-First World War era the heirs of earlier Orientalist scholarship, and to what extent were they influenced by Weberian themes?
4. Did modernisation theory provide more dynamism to Western approaches to Islam and modernity?

5. Why does the Western Orientalist judgement of Islamic modernism constitute a particularly useful field for understanding the historic limitations of Western notions of Islam's capacity to cope with modernity? Why was the argument of Western Orientalists on Islamic modernism's alleged apologetic attitude circular?
6. Why was the focus of some new scholars on the Islamic eighteenth century since the late 1970s a particularly viable means to attempt to subvert entrenched Orientalist standards and themes concerning Islam's relation to modernity?
7. On whose ground were these attempts critiqued by Orientalist scholars? How did the new scholars answer back?
8. Do you think that the history of the Western scholarship of Islam on the issue of modernity shows an excessive attention to textual traditions to the detriment of socio-political context, or rather an oscillation between privileging the text and the context?

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PART 2

Negotiating Modernity

CHAPTER 3

Political Modernity

Sami Zubaida

Introduction

The politics of pre-modern Muslim societies, like that of most pre-modern empires, was that of patrimonialism. Political actors, alliances and struggles were shaped by material interests and the power and influence that sustained them. These, in turn, were structured in accordance with kinship solidarities and associated networks of community and patronage. Was there, then, a specific input of Islam, as ideology or organisation, that marked these pre-modern societies as Islamic?

Gibb and Bowen (1950, 1957), who entitled their seminal book on the Ottoman Empire *Islamic Society and the West*, at one point appear to be searching for this 'Islamic society' and finding it mainly in the religious institutions. The first chapter in the section on religion opens with the following passage:

> The term 'Islamic Society', applied to the social organization which we are analysing, implies that its distinguishing features are related in some way or another to the religion of Islam. Yet in those groups and activities which have been considered up to this point [aspects of government, social and economic life] there is little which can be regarded as specifically Islamic; on the contrary, the organisation of village and industrial life belongs rather to a stage of social evolution which finds close parallels in many non-Islamic regions of Europe and Asia; and that of the Court and the army, though of a more peculiar type, is based upon principles to which such Islamic elements as they display appear to be purely incidental. (Gibb and Bowen 1957: 70)

They go on to show that institutions and social relations characterised the religious elements of that society. We may follow suit and underline the materiality of religion, its social and economic institutions and their inscription in relations of power and authority, and in the shaping of political actors, alliances and conflicts. The churches and their institutions played similar roles in historical European societies. There are also the ideological or discursive elements of religion, in turn related to identity formation. Religion, in Europe and the Middle East, provided the major vocabularies of legitimation and contest.

The materiality of religion

There are common forms of institutions in most historical Muslim societies, such as the mosques, madrasas (seminaries), and *awqaf* (endowments). These, however, had different significance at different times and places. In Ottoman lands, religion, for the most part, was well institutionalised and even bureaucratised. The ulama were organised in ranks and functions divided between education and the practice of law. These were, in turn, related to madrasas as educational and qualifying institutions, hierarchically ordered with commensurate ranks of their diplomas and licences. There were strict rules as to the level of attainment allowing licensees to assume different ranks within the judiciary, the educational system and the bureaucracy. These rules, however, were arbitrarily suspended for considerations of kinship and patronage, allowing young men with little or no proven competence to take over the ranks of their deceased or retired fathers and uncles.[1]

The *awqaf*

The *awqaf* were crucial elements in the economy and politics of cities and countries. Vast endowments of agricultural and urban real estate, as well as, in some cases, cash investments and cattle, generated considerable revenues and provided avenues of employment and patronage, assumed primarily by the religious classes as administrators, overseers and agents.[2] Over the years, the Ottoman sultans endowed mosques, madrasas, Sufi (mystical brotherhoods) lodges, soup kitchens and numerous charities. High-ranking palace officials (for many years, until the eighteenth century, it was the Chief Black Eunuch, the *kiz aghasi*) controlled these revenues, but they were disbursed to and through religious institutions and personnel (Gibb and Bowen 1957: 171–8). In Istanbul we have a well-preserved example in the Sulaymaniya mosque complex, built and endowed by Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent in the sixteenth century, with his architect Sinan. It comprised the mosque, a madrasa, Sufi lodges and soup kitchens for feeding professors, students (the food portions were double for the former), travellers and the mendicant poor. The revenues and management were undertaken by a hierarchy of religious personnel. They were primarily sustained by rents from urban real estate, giving their administrators control over vital sectors of the urban economy. In addition to the royal *awqaf* there were numerous endowments from prominent officials and families, as well as 'private' endowments designed to benefit families and their descendants. As one would expect, these endowments and their administration constituted crucial elements in urban politics and relations of power (van Leeuwen 1999).

Judicial institutions

The office of qadi was one of the edifices of power and patronage in the Ottoman state. Under the *shaykh al-islam*, who occupied the top religious rank

in the Ottoman court and was the chief mufti of the empire, the two following ranks were those of the two *kadi asker*, 'military' judges (*asker* designated the official as well as the military class) of Rumelia and Anatolia. Under them was a whole hierarchy of judges, appointed to each major city and province in the empire. Each titular qadi presided over a hierarchy of deputies and subordinates, carrying out functions of litigation, guardianship over public order and morality, and, crucially, notary functions of sanctioning contracts and transactions, guardianship over *awqaf*, guardianship over minors' property, all lucrative functions, generating fees, commissions, and opportunities for gain, as well as employment and patronage. The titular qadi, like provincial governors, was appointed for a limited period of time from the Porte and was usually foreign to the city/province. He worked through local judicial officials, who acted as his deputies. For that qadi the position was primarily one of generating revenue for the limited period of appointment. These institutions, then, constituted another avenue of power, wealth and influence, and as such were crucial to political functions.[3]

Sufi lodges

Every Ottoman city, indeed every Muslim city, contains the shrines of saints, as centres of organisation of Sufi lodges, of pilgrimage and of charity. They are typically presided over by a descendant of the founder of the order, the very saint whose shrine is at the centre. They vary greatly in size, wealth and influence, but in most cases constitute important players in the urban/regional economies and politics. Typically, they are the beneficiaries of endowments, some resulting from the patronage of the mighty: Ottoman sultans and their viziers, Mamluk commanders and other potentates were particularly prone to the appeal and the services of the saints and their mystical followers.[4] The shaykhs of the more popular and plebeian orders had their own role in urban economy and politics, being in control over particular trade guilds and associated urban quarters. Some played their part in the political and factional mobilisation of the populace at times of trouble.[5] The shaykhs of the major Sufi orders (*tariqa*, pl. *turuq*) sometimes held other religious functions as judges and muftis. The relations between Sufism and the 'orthodox' religious institutions varied with time and context, and, while antagonistic and disputatious in certain instances, were, for the most part, symbiotic and amicable.

The *ashraf*

The descendants of the Prophet were known as *ashraf*; this was an institutionalised religious rank with economic and political privileges. In most cities and regions, the *ashraf* constituted corporate groups, sometimes armed, with tax privileges and access to office. Many of the *mashayikh* of the major Sufi orders claimed *sharif* status. The doyen of the Gaylani family in Baghdad, for instance,

hereditary chief of the Qadiri order and guardian of a major shrine, is traditionally the *naqib al-ashraf* of the city to the present day (Batatu 1978: 207–23).

We see, then, that religion constituted and shaped material factors, which peopled the social landscape with its institutions and personnel as well as economic and political spaces and actors. We shall see how these interacted with other political players in historical Muslim societies. But let us first consider the discursive and identity elements in politics.

Discursive and ideological components of religion in politics

Prior to the development of modern secular ideologies regarding political systems (more below), the main ideational fields available for political legitimacy and for conducting political contests and struggles derived from religion, in Europe as much as in the Middle East. The ruler was the 'Defender of the Faith' or the *amir al-mu'minin*, Commander of the Believers, the champion of enlarging the territory of Christianity/Islam and defending it against infidel enemies. Contestation from rival sources for power, or emanating from protests of the lower orders, was also couched in religious terms regarding piety, faith and justice.

For example, having traced the pattern of urban movements in several Arab cities in the nineteenth century, Burke concludes that riots did not consist of aimless violence, but were indeed directed to particular targets, which were the loci of their grievances: 'The burden of the foregoing', he states, 'is that there was indeed a popular ideology of social protest in the Middle Eastern societies which centred upon the application of the *shari'a* by a vigilant Muslim ruler' (Edmund Burke 1989: 47–8). He goes on to enumerate the various economic provisions of the *shari'a*, whose application was demanded by the protesters, including restriction on taxation and on debasement of the coinage and the prohibition of usury.

There is no doubt that the demand for justice and for a just prince was at the centre of popular protest. Notions of justice are inevitably religious and customary (the two not always being distinct in the popular or even learned mind). Indeed, even in inter-elite conflicts one party would denounce the other as traitors or deviants from religious prescriptions (al-Jabarti n.d., vol. 1: 621–2). The language of righteousness and justice was intimately tied to religion, although this is not to say that there was a precise notion of the *shari'a* or of what actually constituted legal and illegal taxes and coinages. From the earliest times Muslim rulers had levied taxes and other dues dictated by administrative fiat and not by religious notions, and the ulama and *fuqaha'* were not, for the most part, accustomed to raising legal objections. The exceptions were situations of conflict, disorder and crisis in which the weight of fiscal oppression, food prices and plain pillage were regular features, and in which protests whether by ulama,

rival princes or the populace always laid their claim to justice in religious, that is, *shar'i* terms. Religion and legality provided a *vocabulary* of demands and contests rather than a determinate notion of alternative political or legal orders. Burke and others have described these forms of contestation and opposition as 'moral economy'. The argument here is that it is best to regard this economy as a language of contestation rather than as a precise description of an existing or desired system.

Within this ideological sphere of contest, the existing system of rule is taken as given: the object is to make the prince just or to exchange him for a more just ruler. The only form of radical transformation envisaged is that of the end of time. While messianic notions thrived, in both Sunni and Shi'i Islam, they tended to animate rural and tribal rather than urban politics. A notable example was the Sudanese Mahdiyya in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This movement was, in large part, a response to the Anglo-Egyptian intrusion into Sudan and the imposition of a colonial order on a country characterised largely by tribal and religious local rulers and autonomies. To that extent it had elements of modernity in its constitution, and addressed a universalist message to a Muslim world. But its messianic ideology and mode of political mobilisation of tribal and Sufi religious forces shared much with pre-modern formations.[6] Retrospective accounts from nationalist perspectives (Sudanese, Arab and Muslim) have tried to play down, if not deny, the messianic and tribal nature of the movement in order to include it in a uniform history of modern nationalism.

The other discursive element of religion in politics was its definition of communal identity. Communities in pre-modern societies, and in some cases until recent times, tended to be geographically insulated, largely self-sufficient and self-managing. As such the primary markers of identity were those of locality and kinship. Religious identity tended to be taken for granted (of course, I am Muslim/Christian, what else, God forbid?). So this identity came into political play only when religious differences became the site of conflict. Religion then became a communal marker, much like Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. Muslim/Copt relations in parts of Egypt came into political play under certain conditions, such as the Napoleonic invasion and its aftermath at the end of the eighteenth century, which precipitated communal riots against Christians. The communal conflicts and even massacres between Muslims, Christians and Druze in Lebanon/Syria between 1840 and the 1860s are examples of the politicisation of religious difference under the impact of the transformations of the European colonisation and Ottoman reforms.[7]

The pre-modern Middle Eastern city and its politics

We have already glimpsed the institutional and material religious elements in the political landscape of the historical city. These came into play in relation to the

(typically) military and sultanic rulers: Sultans, Mamluks and Aghas, with their soldiery and administrative formations. Their main concern in government was revenue and order. Peasants, craftsmen and traders produced wealth; the elites were primarily concerned with appropriating the major part of this production in taxes and rents. Pre-modern politics was primarily about regulating the shares from these revenues between different factions of the elites. Occasionally, under conditions of crisis and war when the burden of exploitation intensified, the oppressed populace would protest or even riot, which constituted another element of politics.

An Ottoman provincial city, such as Aleppo in the eighteenth century, would be formally governed by a Pasha/Wali appointed from Istanbul for a limited period, usually one year. He would have had to purchase this appointment, and would recoup his investment with profit from the revenues of the province, and so would the qadi and a host of other functionaries. The Pasha would have his own military force, which would coexist with local military forces of Janissaries, Sipahis ('feudal' contingents), Mamluks and sundry others, who were not strictly under his command but who took their orders from their own headquarters. There were also non-military groups who bore arms, such as tribesmen and *ashraf* (descendants from the Prophet, organised in corporations), as well as bandits. The appointed governor could rule effectively only through the cooperation of local elites: landowners, merchants and ulama, who were often interrelated in elite families, marriages and functions.[8] Many of these rich notables were also tax-farmers, and many were involved in provisioning the city from its rural hinterland. All the populace, including the notables, were liable to tax, except for the official and military (*'askari*) classes, including official ulama, who were exempt. Taxes were often levied on corporate and not individual bases: trade guilds, minority religious communities, villages and tribes were such corporate taxpayers, with the communal chiefs apportioning the burden between their members. The common people of peasants and tradesmen were at the bottom of the pile and subject to oppressive exactions (McGowan 1994). Now and again they would protest and riot. These risings, however, were sporadic and confined to particular issues, usually to do with taxes and bread prices (manipulated by the elites for their profit). What forms did these riots take, and what was the part played by religious elements?

The mosque was the point of assembly and expression of grievances for most demonstrations and protests, and the minarets the loci of public calls to action. The crowds almost always took their grievances first to prominent ulama and attempted to enlist them as leaders and spokesmen for their demands to the princes. Naturally, this led many observers to suppose that the ulama were the leaders of the urban populace and their representatives before the authorities. This view is strongly challenged by some writers on the subject, most notably for Egypt by Gabriel Baer (1977).

Baer (1977: 228–42) distinguishes between the high ulama, the teachers at al-Azhar, the holders of high office, and supervisors of large foundations, and the lower ulama, clerks, *maktab* (elementary school) teachers, muezzins and imams at small mosques, and above all the students at the Azhar university. The lower ulama were prominent in leadership and participation in popular movements. They were, however, regarded by the rulers and the bourgeoisie as part of the lower orders and not as intermediaries and representatives with access to the ears of authority. These, and in particular the students, were prominent in many of the popular movements and events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including the risings against the French.

As for the high ulama, it is true that the populace, faced with fiscal oppression and famine, first resorted to them, particularly to the Shaykh al-Azhar. The responses of the ulama, however, with few exceptions, were seldom favourable. They were sometimes coerced by potentially violent crowds into leading processions to the Citadel and airing their grievances. André Raymond draws a typical scenario: the crowd proceeds to the Grand Mosque, occupies the minarets and calls for resistance; their calls are accompanied by the beat of drums. They close the markets and the shops. They assemble in the forecourts and at the gates of the mosque and demand the presence of the shaykhs and their intervention with the authorities regarding their grievances. They proceed in a procession with the ulama at its head 'more dead than alive'. If a favourable response is obtained from the Citadel, then the ulama are entrusted as guarantors of its implementation (Raymond [1973] 1999: 432–3). The people suspect that the ulama are in league with the authorities, and the authorities suspect them of stirring up the people. Naturally, the ulama tried, whenever they could, to avoid this role. Their response was always to try and calm down any potential agitations, and if they failed, to avoid involvement. They naturally shared the attitudes of the authorities and the bourgeoisie in fear and contempt of the lowly crowds. In addition, many of the high ulama had close political and economic ties with the princes.

The question of political modernity

The forms of politics described so far can be distinguished as 'pre-modern'. The question then arises as to the nature of political modernity. Michael Walzer (1966: 1) characterised it in the following terms:

> A politics of conflict and competition for power, of faction, intrigue and open war is probably universal in human history. Not so a politics of party organisation and methodical activity, opposition and reform, radical ideology and revolution. . . . The detached appraisal of a going system, the programmatic expression of discontent and aspiration, the organisation of zealous men for sustained political activity: it is surely fair to say that these three together are aspects of the modern, that is, the post-medieval political world.

In *The Revolution of the Saints*, Walzer proceeds to argue that the Calvinists of the English Civil War were the first to develop this form of politics. He goes on, however, to specify general conditions that make this form of politics possible: the separation of politics from the household, the appearance of masterless free men, the rational and pragmatic consideration of political methods (as in Machiavelli), and, crucially, the rise of large-scale and inclusive political units, as in the modern state, starting with the absolutist destruction of feudal segmentarity in Europe (Walzer 1966: 16).

In these terms, the forms of politics described so far are decidedly premodern. Inter-elite politics is clearly one of 'conflict and competition for power, of faction, intrigue, and open war'. Solidarities are based on personal loyalties and patronage (as in Mamluk households), kinship and, in the case of the popular classes, neighbourhood, guilds and *turuq* (Sufi orders). Crucial to all these is a strong 'materialism', an orientation to economic interests. The ultimate stakes in practically all political struggles were revenues, and, for the city population, food prices, fiscal oppression and other arbitrary exactions. Popular movements were often spontaneous and short-lived, revolving around immediate grievances. As such, they were far from 'sustained political activity'. The issues had nothing to do with reform or revolution of a 'system'; such a concept would have been quite alien. Popular aspirations were always for the advent of a just prince who would bring stability and security. It can be argued, then, that pre-modern politics was predominantly 'materialist' and that the ideological elements of religion, kinship and patronage were strongly coloured by these materialist considerations.

To say, however, that this kind of politics is 'pre-modern' may be misleading, for it is universal and has certainly survived into and adapted to modernity. The politics of faction, patronage and kinship has a strong presence in many modern societies, not just Muslim or 'Third World', but also in many parts of Europe and America. It is just that modern politics, as characterised by Walzer, is specific to modernity, but coexists, in various combinations, with preceding forms.

Episodes in the transition to modernity

Over the course of the 'long' nineteenth century (from the French Revolution to the First World War) and then the twentieth, Walzer's conditions of political modernity developed at a different pace in different parts of most of the region. They naturally took various forms in different areas following peculiarities of history and society. Let us briefly review some of these conditions.

The transformations resulted mainly from the incorporation of the region into the expanding capitalist markets dominated by the European powers. This was not merely European domination, but transformations of economy and society, creating new spheres of activity, classes of the population and relations of power.

Political, military and administrative reforms were responses of ruling groups to new situations. The Ottoman reforms started in the late eighteenth century, and, after much turmoil and many setbacks, were consolidated in the *tanzimat* and legal reforms throughout the nineteenth century. This process constituted the formation of the modern state, a quasi nation state, in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. The centralisation of state power was facilitated by the spread of modern means of transport and communication and enhanced military capabilities, not only technical but also organisational and political, such as the bloody abolition of the by then useless and parasitic Janissaries in 1826. Many spheres of social and economic functions were subsumed under state bureaucracy, crucially the legal system and education previously controlled by religious institutions. The state intruded increasingly into the running and revenues of the *awqaf*, until they became largely state institutions by the early twentieth century. Transport and communication, crucially the railways and telegraphy from the mid-nineteenth century, broke down the isolation of remote areas and brought them into the spheres of the capitalist economy and state control, in the process allowing primary units of production and solidarity to collapse.[9]

There were also some crucial conceptual shifts, at least at the elite levels. The concept of 'state' is a case in point. The term now translated as 'state' is *dawla*, which in its pre-modern sense meant property or patrimony of a dynasty, as in *dawlat bani al-ʿAbbas*, or *bani ʿUthman/Osman*. The sovereign, not a concept of an institution, was the absolute source of power. When Louis XIV uttered his famous claim 'l'état, c'est moi', it was in the context of affirming a notion that was being contested on the eve of political modernity. In both Muslim and Christian contexts this notion coexisted uneasily with the idea of the absolute sovereignty of God, and many of the religious formulae of power glossed over this ambiguity. Law for the Ottomans, for instance, was, theoretically, the law of God, as promulgated and guarded by the ulama. The fact that so much of the law was statute law, issuing from the will of the sovereign, was justified in various formulae regarding the administration and defence of the interests and powers of Muslims. Ultimately, the law issues from the dual sources of God and King. The conceptual innovation of modernity, as it developed in Ottoman reforms of the nineteenth century, was to recast the law and its practice as impersonal institutions of 'justice', *ʿadalet*, with legislative bodies enacting law; and judges and lawyers, trained in modern law schools, applying codified laws, independent from the books of *fiqh* or the statutes of the king: the idea of the 'rule of law', the *Rechtsstaat* (Berkes [1964] 1998: 94–9; Zubaida 2003: 125–40). Related to these concepts was that of 'citizenship'. Citizens, as distinct from 'subjects', *raʿaya*, had rights and duties defined by law, and were invited to participate in political processes through representation, and were equal before the law regardless of religious, tribal or regional affiliation (keeping in mind that these were the concepts, not the practices). So many of the political conflicts and struggles over this period

were over these issues, grouped under the demand for a constitution, in both the Ottoman Empire and Iran, limiting the power of the king by law. While most of the reforming Ottoman monarchs of the nineteenth century initiated or supported the reforms, they eventually baulked at the idea of a constitution and parliament limiting their powers. Sultan Abdulhamid II (1842–1918) ultimately used Islam as a weapon to abort the constitution and parliament in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, and his ultimate defeat and deposition by the Young Turks was in the name of the constitution. In the processes of political struggles over these issues Islam was ideologised in modern ways (Deringil 1998).

Winners and losers

These processes of modernity led to disparities in advantage and loss to different sectors of the population. Local trades and crafts were hit by cheap imports widely distributed through new forms of transportation such as the railways (Quataert 2000: 110–39). Some agricultural sectors benefited from cash crop distribution and export, such as cotton in Egypt, but at the same time these led to heightened exploitation and oppression of the peasants. New classes developed: a modern working class in the railways and harbours, for instance, as well as the expanded urban services and administration (on which more below). Government bureaucracy, as well as new sectors in education and the professions, formed new middle classes with distinct world views (Berkes [1964] 1998: 277–8; Mardin 1989: 136–8). It was the religious classes who, for the most part, lost out. Their core functions of law and education were being bureaucratised as state functions, performed by personnel trained in modern educational institutions. Some religious figures, mainly from the elites, went along with the reforms and adapted to them, such as Jawdat Pasha (Cevdet Paşa), the architect of the Majalla (Mecelle), the codified 'civil-law' element of the *shari'a*, and the various Egyptian and Syrian modernist ulama who were fascinated by the new world (Hourani 1983: 161–92, 271–3; Berkes [1964] 1998: 169–72). Other sectors of the ulama, including the lower orders, opposed or attacked the reforms and the processes of modernity in the name of religion and tradition. The weakness of the Empire vis-à-vis the European powers, they argued, was because of the departure from the path commanded by God in his *shari'a*, and the imitation of the hostile infidels. Their advocacy found a ready response among the poorer classes who had lost out, as well as among some of the old elites of military ranks and landed classes who were disadvantaged by the new changes. These were conservative or reactionary responses. Another response with religious tinges was that of modernist thinkers and reformers, who did not oppose modernity as such, but the autocratic manner in which it was carried out, and the continuing absolutism of power. These included the group in mid-century known as the Young Ottomans; intellectuals, poets, journalists and functionaries, widely

read in European literature and political theory, who read natural law theory into some construction of an original Islam of the first generation, which they claimed had brought liberty and law.[10] The gift of liberty, argued Namik Kemal, is not some largesse bestowed by the Sultan upon his subjects, but it was a gift from God to the Muslims. Those intellectuals, in their ideas and lifestyles, were highly secular, and their appeal was to the new middle classes. One of their demands was for a constitution and parliament in order to limit the power of the Sultan. An associated statesman, Midhat Pasha, was the champion and architect of a constitution and parliament, which came into effect in 1876, only to be suspended a year later by the Sultan Abdulhamid II. This latter presided over a much-reduced empire, which had lost most of its European territories and Christian populations and become almost entirely Muslim, with Turks, Arabs and Kurds. He made an ideological virtue of that by the ideologisation of Islam against Europe and at the same time by cultivating conservative Muslim sentiment against the forces calling for democracy and constitutionalism.[11] He nurtured the image of the traditional Muslim absolute ruler enforcing the commands of God and the correct path. At the same time he continued with the processes of centralisation and bureaucratisation that etatised previously religious functions, and constituted a form of secularisation. In this, Abdulhamid set the pattern, which was to prevail through the twentieth century, of authoritarian rulers resisting opposition or limitations on their power by invoking religion and casting their opponents as infidels.

Islam then was ideologised and politicised into forms that recur in modern politics: the conservatives, resorting to populism as well as the support of authoritarian rulers; modern reformists reading liberalism into Islam; and, to emerge later, in the early decades of the twentieth century, radical populists, such as the Muslim Brothers. At the same time, so much of cultural, intellectual and political life was secularised, favouring the emergence and dominance of secular ideologies and political movements.

These processes of modernity proceeded in the general context of increasing European penetration, in some cases, as in Egypt, of direct military and political control. This shaped the structure of modern politics, predominantly urban, in forms of anti-colonial struggle. The models of liberation and of independent government were derived from European ideas and ideologies, first liberal and nationalist, and later fascist and socialist. National liberation and nationalism remained a central component of all these ideologies and political movements. Islamist ideology also developed in this context.

On the social level the processes of economic development and political centralisation contributed to the breakdown of primary social unities and solidarities of tribe, village and urban quarter, although this proceeded unevenly in different places. Egyptian guilds were weakened as they lost their monopoly over labour in their particular crafts and became redundant by the 1920s (Baer 1968:

142–7), but their Iranian counterparts retained many of their social and political functions in the bazaars until much later in the century.[12] Rural to urban migration, a crucial factor for the shaping of the urban economy, society and politics, started in the early twentieth century in Egypt, but gathered momentum from the middle of the century, augmented by accelerated population growth. The quarters of central Cairo were transformed, the rural influx leading to the departure of the rich and the middle classes to the more salubrious suburbs, the old quarters becoming poor slums. This process also weakened the organisation and solidarity of the quarters and their function as corporate units.

The expansion of a modernised state and associated public sectors, most notably education, spawned a new, largely secular, intelligentsia. This became the ideological class par excellence, which absorbed and adapted the new reformist, nationalist and revolutionary ideas whose goal was the achievement of national independence and strength and the transformation of state and society in accordance with particular ideological blueprints. From these ranks came Walzer's 'zealous men' organised for 'sustained political activity'.

The overall political and administrative thrust of the Tanzimat was for increasing centralisation of government and control of the people, and a concomitant expansion in the size, reach and power of the bureaucracy. By the end of the century, it is estimated that there were half a million civil servants who, in addition to mainstream government administration and finance, also administered hospitals, secular schools, agricultural schools and model farms, highways, telegraph and railroads (Quataert 1994: 765). Crucially, these were 'modern' functionaries, with institutional positions and powers (as distinct from the personalistic networks that had characterised earlier administrations). They, together with professionals, army officers and some sectors of business, constituted the modern middle class, and the cadres of modernisation and secularisation. They supplied the leadership and personnel of the Young Turks movement.[13] During the Tanzimat era, this central administration gained in power and control over other power elites. The military reforms, though not a brilliant success in external wars, were instrumental in imposing the central power on the provinces and their elites. The local notables and chieftains, with extensive autonomies till the middle of the eighteenth century, came firmly under government control, and its centrally appointed functionaries, although many maintained their local power bases as power-brokers and tax-farmers: a practice that the central government did not succeed in disrupting (ibid.: 769). In the Kurdish and Arab provinces, the nomadic tribes were firmly subordinated by the new military forces and the extension of transport and communications. This was an important step in pacifying these provinces and enhancing the security and productivity of the settled agricultural populations.

The expansion of government service and of employment in the expanding private sectors of commerce, transport and communication, together with the

growth of educational institutions and the professions, all led to a large expansion in the numbers and significance of the modern educated middle classes, as well as to the beginnings of a modern working class. These literate strata constituted a market for print products: newspapers, magazines, novels and plays – many translated from the French, with a special fascination for Jules Verne and other science fiction (see Berkes [1964] 1998: 278) – and books on science and discovery. Government censorship and control precluded political news and analyses, or discourses on European government, parliaments or revolutions. But newspapers and magazines filled their pages with news of scientific discoveries, biographies of prominent men, travel, practical tips on health and domestic organisation, and so on (ibid.: 277). Many people read, and the illiterate listened to others reading aloud. The effect of these interests on the secularisation of culture was in the way they presented an alternative universe to that of traditional limited horizons and ranges of interest. These were sources of knowledge and models of living quite outside the world of religion, custom and authority. They also had a profound political effect: Juan Cole (1993: 115–26) pointed out (in relation to contemporary Egypt) that the accessibility of news of government and politics, and of evaluations of events and actions in the press, engenders in the modern citizen the frame of mind of a participant in events, who has opinions and interests, and is thereby no longer passively subjected to the decisions and policies of rulers and ulama, the traditional *ahl al-hall wa-l-ʿaqd*, 'those who loosen and bind'. The café played an important part in political dissemination, argument and intrigue in many Middle Eastern cities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At the turn of the twenty-first century, some traditional cafés in Turkish cities are called *kıraathane* (*qira'at-khane*), reading rooms, indicating the function of reading newspapers and pamphlets, perhaps aloud (they are now mostly gaming rooms). These constituted an important element of the emerging 'public sphere' in those cities. Under the Abdulhamid regime at the turn of the nineteenth–twentieth centuries police spies were ever vigilant in monitoring the coffee houses.

Gabriel Baer (1968) contrasted the social and ideological composition of the popular movements in Egypt, first at the time of the ʿUrabi revolt in 1882, then in 1919 in the nationalist demonstration led by Saad Zaghloul against the British occupation. The first was led by junior ulama and Azhar students, with slogans against the infidels, Christians, whether Europeans or Egyptian Copts, which expressed 'traditional' communalist sentiments. By 1919 the leaders were teachers and students from the modern schools and universities, and the slogans were for national unity (Muslims and Copts), independence and liberty. Zaghloul's famous slogan was *al-din li-llah wa-l-watan li-l-jamiʿ*, 'religion is for God and the homeland is for all its members'. That is not to say, of course, that communalist sentiments were transcended: we know from the history of the region that these sentiments were frequently and effectively evoked by interested

parties to combat opponents. Communalism as a political weapon was to recur in Egypt until the time of writing, with the various Islamists playing on antagonism to Copts to gain support and revenue in Upper Egypt and elsewhere. The difference now, however, is that communalism, while popular, is stigmatised by respectable political activists and theorists of all hues, including the mainstream Islamists. This is much like populist racism in Europe, denied by all respectable parties but always tempting for politicians who want cheap popularity. This shift in the politics of communalism comes after more than a century of modern politics, mostly secular and nationalist.

The period of political modernity in Iran

Iran presents us with a political history distinct from that of Ottoman lands. The Qajar state (1794–1925) was decentralised, with much power in the hands of local elites. It did not have a significant standing army and relied on tribal forces for its wars (with disastrous consequences). The religious institutions and personnel enjoyed considerable autonomy from the state, forming parts of the decentralised power elites of landlords, merchants and clerics, many with private militias. The clerics controlled wide networks of merchants, guilds and the popular classes. The tentative steps to modernity, and the increasing power and influence of Britain and Russia in the country, led to waves of discontent and protest, often directed by the clerics and culminating in the agitations for the Constitution in the opening years of the twentieth century and the Constitutional Revolution of 1906.[14] The campaign for the Constitution was initiated and supported by a number of diverse constituencies, both traditional and modern. The ideas were those of modern educated intellectuals of the upper classes. They were supported by some clerics, for different motives. Some traditional clerics saw in the constitution and parliament a way of limiting the now threatening power of the Shah and his European financiers and bankers, which made them liable to taxation. Others, notably Ayatullah Mirza Muhammad Husayn Na'ini, became articulate advocates of the Constitution, providing a religious rationale for its implementation (Enayat 1982: 164–9; Martin 1989: 165–200). A third constituency were bazaar merchants, fed up with arbitrary rule and taxation and allied to some of the ulama. Few of the clerics understood the meaning and implications of the Constitution, and took sides on that basis. Na'ini supported it with a theological treatise; Ayatollah Fazlullah Nuri opposed it as un-Islamic. Most of the clerics who supported the Revolution saw only its practical implications of limiting the power of the Shah in their favour in the new representative system (Martin 1989). The Revolution was followed by much conflict, reaction and war, in which Britain, and especially Russia, played decisive parts. The situation finally stabilised with the accession to power of Reza Shah in 1926. He was a modernising dictator, who admired his Turkish contemporary,

Atatürk, and aspired to similar reforms, including the secularisation of Iranian society by curbing the powers and privileges of the clerics. Political modernity and its particular forms of organisation and mobilisation came to Iran in those years and what followed them, operating side by side with the 'traditional' forms of allegiance and action. Intense political struggles, with these different forms, developed in the years during and following the Second World War (Abrahamian 1982: 50–101). A consideration of this period is instructive for our discussion of political modernity.

Abrahamian (1968: 201–7) has analysed the transformations in crowd behaviour from the events of the Constitutional Revolution to the political struggles surrounding the Mossadegh government in the early 1950s. Modern political organisation, both nationalist and socialist, developed and grew during the 1920s. In particular, the communist Tudeh Party became an important political force, which played a crucial role in subsequent events. The leading sections of the various parties, as could have been expected, consisted of educated middle-class professionals, particularly students and teachers, but they also included elements of the new working classes in the oil refineries, railways and the few modern factories, as well as some traditional artisans and bazaar workers. The Tudeh Party became dominant in trade-union organisation and militancy. Until Reza Shah's removal in 1941, these activities proceeded clandestinely and were subjected to violent repression. Reza Shah's deposition by the Allies inaugurated a more tolerant though by no means liberal regime, which allowed more open political activity and organisation and during which first the Tudeh Party and then the National Front came to prominence. This episode ultimately culminated in the premiership of Mossadegh, his nationalisation of Iranian oil and his struggle against the monarchy and its allies. Mossadegh's stormy rule was ended in 1953 by a US-instigated military coup, which returned Mohammad Reza Shah to absolute power and political repression.

The Tudeh Party and the trade unions associated with it assumed commanding positions in popular organisation and mobilisation. In 1945, the Central Council of United Trade Unions had a total membership of 400,000 (Abrahamian 1968: 202). In addition to workers in modern industries, it included the syndicates of teachers, lawyers, engineers and doctors. At one public meeting in 1946, 15,000 attended. On May Day 1946, the union parade in Abadan brought out 81,000 demonstrators. The union pursued militant demands in the oil industry, and the company's attempt to break a strike led to violent riots in Abadan and Ahwaz (Abrahamian 1968: 203; 1982: 281–325).

Mossadegh came to national prominence as a nationalist leader in 1945, and immediately attracted mass support, particularly from the bazaar and students. The National Front, a coalition of nationalist parties, organised this support, and the Tudeh Party joined in, though the alliance was often uneasy because of serious differences within the Front over communism and the Soviet

Union. The ulama were notable for the minor role they played in these events, apart from one prominent cleric, Ayatullah Kashani, who initially supported Mossadegh then turned against him. While, no doubt, the mullahs continued to have the allegiance of some popular sectors, these were not politically significant at this stage. New sectors of the urban populace were affiliated to the new politics, and were set loose from the earlier hegemony and affiliations of bazaar and ulama.[15]

In July 1952, Mossadegh, faced with hostile manœuvres by the Shah and his supporters, resigned tactically, succeeding in eliciting a revolt in Tehran. As soon as news of his resignation reached the bazaar, traders and craftsmen fought the security forces to make their way to parliament. The National Front deputies called for a general strike, and the Tudeh joined in. The bazaar closed down entirely, and there were strikes in all the sectors controlled by the Tudeh and the unions. After attempts at violent suppression, the government capitulated. The heaviest fighting took place in the bazaar, in the working-class industrial districts and the railway repair shops, on the route between the university and parliament and in Parliament Square. Students, of course, were prominent in these events. The worst slum districts of southern Tehran were quiet. The centres of popular activism had shifted (Abrahamian 1982: 270–2).

There were marked differences between Cairo and the Iranian cities in the first half of the twentieth century. Cairo underwent a basic dislocation of its old urban structure of quarter organisation, guild and *tariqa* (Sufi order), caused both by the impact of colonial penetration and by the incorporation into world markets, including wide-ranging rural development, which led, eventually, to mass migration to the city. Egypt also underwent a significant level of industrialisation. Through bazaar associations and their coordination, Iranian cities maintained important sectors of autonomous urban organisation. Modern politics and ideologies of nationalism, liberalism and communism developed and thrived for the most part in the new social spaces of university, school, workshop and coffee house. At the same time they were effective in urban mass mobilisation only through catering to the structures and interests of the bazaar. These, in turn, were transformed by the forces and processes of modernity, but were never displaced as centres of urban autonomy. The bazaar was to be the hub of organisation, finance and coordination in all the political upheavals of the century, and, crucially, for the Islamic Revolution of 1978–9.

Given the secularisation of the political field in the middle decades of the twentieth century, the question arises as to why the 1979 Revolution was led by a cleric and established the Islamic Republic. The years between the Mossadegh government and the Revolution were a time of severe repression of all non-regime politics. The next episode of challenge to the regime and its subsequent confrontation came in 1961–3, this time from religious sources in Qum. This was the first appearance of Ruhullah Khomeini as a clerical challenger. The

occasion was the religious agitations against land reforms by the Shah. Khomeini widened the challenge to the arbitrary powers of the Shah and his disregard for religion and its upholders. It was the culmination of a simmering resentment by the religious classes and their supporters against the secularising regime of Reza Shah, followed by his son. Khomeini's forthright denunciation of the Shah and his policies agitated religious students and elements of the bazaar in Qum and Tehran, where his agents had been organising support. This elicited a forceful and violent repression by the authorities and the ultimate arrest, then exile, of Khomeini, first to Turkey, then to Iraq. [16] On that occasion, the secular opposition of the nationalists and the left stood aside, with characteristic distaste for what they considered reactionary religious forces, dubbed 'black reaction' (a reference to the black garments of the mullahs) by the regime.

The Shah attempted to control all centres of social and political autonomy and ultimately to subsume any civil association under his Rastakhiz Party, in imitation of the nationalist one-party states of the 'Third World'. The social and economic upheavals inaugurated by the oil revenue boom of the early 1970s included high levels of rural migration, high inflation, economic dislocations and disappointed expectations by wide sectors of the population. The educated middle classes, beneficiaries of the Shah's generous educational measures and lucrative employment, were frustrated by the continuing repression and exclusion from political and policy participation. All these factors led to a crisis of legitimacy and mounting discontent, which were to break out in the revolutionary events of 1977–9 (Abrahamian 1982: 496–524; Zubaida 1993: 64–82). When, for a variety of reasons, not least of which were the pressures from an uneasy American administration under the comparatively liberal presidency of Carter, the Shah loosened his grip, a variety of political and cultural forces stirred. These, for the most part, lacked organisation and resources, and mostly acquiesced in the Islamic leadership, which offered both. This acquiescence was facilitated by the anti-imperialist and seemingly liberationist slogans of Khomeini and his followers, calling for a 'Republic', denouncing monarchy and *taghut* (godless tyranny), championing the *mustaz'afin* (the oppressed), and, above all, chanting 'death to America'. There were also hints about democracy. Political anti-imperialism of the left also carried with it a Third Worldist and populist cultural nationalism, and Islam (in its modern phase) was seen as an expression of a national essence and the creed of 'the people'. As such it provided a nativist and populist idiom for a revolution. That is to say, the remnants of secular modern politics accepted religious leadership, which seemed to adopt its own ideological motifs in an Islamic idiom. The Islamic politics and ideology of the Iranian Revolution fell mostly within the paradigm of modern politics as characterised above, and it worked through ideological mobilisation of 'the people'. At the same time, sectors of the urban popular classes were mobilised for the revolution through reconstructed traditional channels of bazaar, guild

and religious networks of patronage and allegiance, as well as the familiar religious slogans, and symbols of faith, and the cult of the martyrs.[17]

The repressive and authoritarian regime established by the mullahs under the banner of Islamic government was equally modern: a clique captures the commanding heights of a petrol state and uses its resources for consolidating power and wealth. The Islamic institutions and ideologies of this regime then lose their garb of piety and are seen by the ruled population for what they are: politicians clinging to power and wealth. Yet, the popular revolution was not just a change of government. The mobilisation of wide sectors of the Iranian population, including prominently women, shook the foundations of authority. New attitudes and expectations made it difficult for the mullahs to eradicate opposition, despite repression, at times severe. This loosening of control was aided by the rise of rival centres of power within the government, religious and economic institutions, and personnel. No single dictator, no Saddam or Mubarak, was to arise and monopolise power. Reversing the general trend towards piety in the region, Iranians, whenever given the opportunity, displayed their rejection of religious rule. From the 1997 election of Khatami to the presidency, then the parliamentary elections of 1999, Iranians supported reform, and were bitterly critical of the failed reformers. Ultimately the conservative mullahs had to resort to further transparent acts of repression and falsification in order to retain control. The election of the populist hard-liner Ahmadinejad to the presidency in 2005 was the result of such manipulation, added to the disillusionment of the masses with the failed reforms and the continuing economic hardships and disparities. The struggles continue.

A short note on the modern history of Iraqi politics

Iraqi cities, like their Iranian counterparts, maintained strong elements of quarter identity and solidarity. In the first half of the twentieth century, migration to Baghdad was confined to specific areas adjacent to the city. Urban identities in Baghdad were reinforced by the religious and ethnic divisions of the city. The suburb of al-Kadhimayn, for instance, housed the holy shrine and pilgrimage centre of the Shiʿi Imam al-Kadhim. Across the river was al-Aʿzamiyya, named after the shrine of Abu Hanifa (known as al-Imam al-Aʿzam) located there, and as such a Sunni centre. Other districts were predominantly Jewish or Kurdish. In the political and ideological struggles of the twentieth century, these quarters functioned, not according to their sectarian identities, but mostly as centres of the various modern political forces. The Iraqi Communist Party organised wide popular constituencies among the intelligentsia and the workers, and in the middle decades of the century also had a wide following among the urban poor. Their rivals and antagonists in opposition politics were various strands of Arab nationalists. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Shiʿi and Kurdish quarters were

strong bastions of communism, while some of the Sunni quarters were centres of Arabism. Here we have another example of modern political organisation and ideology being articulated through urban identities and solidarities.[18]

The long decades of Baʿthist rule (1968–2003) suppressed all forms of politics outside its control, traditional or modern, with brutal and indiscriminate violence. In addition, the decades of destructive wars and the sanctions regime from 1991 resulted in great hardship and dislocation in the populace at large, and pushed people increasingly into the embrace of reconstituted communal and tribal solidarities and allegiances (Baram 1997; Jabar 2003b: 110–26). These were to be the most prominent players in the political chaos following the removal of the regime, and the main 'parties' in the first elections of 2005.

The modern political fields and their components

The modern nation state, following on, in some cases, from the colonial state and inheriting many of its features, established the parameters of the new political fields. In the first half of the twentieth century, these states followed the framework of constitutional and 'democratic' institutions on the colonial model, with parliaments, multiple parties, elections and in some cases constitutional monarchies. Many of these states, such as Egypt and Iraq, continued to be dominated by British interests during that period. The political pluralism was partly maintained by these interests, which sought to play one party against another. In Egypt, historians noted the tripartite centres of power between the monarchy, parliament and government, often controlled by sectors of the Wafd, and the British High Commission. Political liberties were precarious, with episodes of suspension of legal protections, martial law and the permanent banning of parties considered subversive, such as the Communist Party and the Muslim Brotherhood.

In the 1950s and 1960s a series of *coups d'état* in many countries in the region transformed both government and politics. Most notable and influential was the Nasserist transformation of Egypt. These were nationalist regimes (Egypt, Iraq, Algeria, Yemen, Libya), which finally escaped dependence on the colonial powers and established independent states. This was made possible by the context of the cold war and Soviet support for the new regimes. In turn, these regimes modelled themselves, to various degrees, on the Soviet example of state socialism, the one-party populist state, but with a military elite at the top, including programmes of land reform, nationalisation and a welfare state. Other countries, mostly the monarchies of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Jordan and Iran, continued to be in the Western camp, but with equally authoritarian and repressive regimes, only aided by oil wealth in gaining the acquiescence if not the support of their populations through welfare perks and economic opportunity.

Another important factor in the politics of the area was the creation of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent wars with the Arab countries and the Palestinian population. The Arab–Israeli conflict has continued to be a powerful source of political themes and symbols, both religious and secular, in the whole region.

A third phase in government regimes may be called the *infitah* era, starting in Egypt in the early 1970s and spreading to other countries. Basically the 'socialist' model failed, weighed down by cumbersome bureaucracy and corruption. The Soviet connection was no longer so attractive, compared to the more tempting American benefits and the connection to the oil-rich Saudi Arabia. Sadat of Egypt started the new wave in the 1970s by expelling the Soviets, aligning with America and Saudi Arabia, liberalising the economy (within severe limits of bureaucracy and corruption) and introducing some measure of political freedom and pluralism, while retaining the dominance of the ruling party. This was accompanied by a peace treaty with Israel, ushering in a chequered history of relations with that state. The collapse of communism, starting in 1989, cut the final connections of some of the nationalist states, primarily Syria, to that camp and led to the virtual hegemony of the United States in the region. The most prominent exception to this process was Islamic Iran.

Styles of politics

The two styles of politics noted above, the modern politics of ideology and organisation, and the universal politics of faction, kinship and patronage, continue to coexist, with authoritarian governments trying to use the former to their advantage through mobilisation of the populace behind the government, while in practice fostering the latter by suppressing political pluralism and encouraging particularistic allegiances as a form of social control.

For example: the Wafd Party in Egypt, in the first 'liberal' era, was an ideological party aiming at national independence and a democratic constitution, and so fought battles, now with the British, now with the monarchy, to these ends. The party enjoyed support from ideologically motivated modern strata of the educated middle class of functionaries, professionals, teachers and students, as well as sectors of the new working class. These were mobilised in demonstrations, strikes and electoral campaigns, although the party, apparently, never instituted a system of membership, and branch offices operated only for elections (Owen 1992: 224–30). At the same time, the main electoral support for party candidates came from peasants and poorer classes, who were in dependent relations of authority and patronage with the rich notables who were the party candidates. Peasants, for instance, were bound to vote for their landlord. Some parties, such as the ruling National Democratic Party in Egypt, get their support entirely from interested groups, seeking jobs, positions, contracts and benefits for particular regions. I should point out that this 'spoils system' of

electoral politics is not peculiar to the region: the very term comes from the USA, where much party support comes from interested constituencies (Kienle 2000: 51–67).

The Nasserist state was strongly ideological, pushing the symbols of pan-Arab nationalism and socialism, under the one party and the one leader. It borrowed the communist rhetoric against (false) bourgeois liberties and pluralist democracy, in favour of national unity, independence, economic development and prosperity. Through land reforms and welfare measures it mobilised the population in seeming support of the party and the leader. The nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 1956 and the subsequent war from which Nasser seemed to emerge victorious gave him tremendous credit and popularity with the Egyptian and Arab public. His portraits were hung in offices, cafés and homes with genuine enthusiasm and not just to avoid trouble. At the same time, the authoritarian state established by Nasser, and its parallels elsewhere, spawned new systems of patronage and particularistic politics. The effects of land reform and nationalisation were to eliminate autonomous social centres of power based on property. They also had the effect of blocking the processes of 'class struggle' that would generate ideological and solidarity oriented political organisations (Owen 1992: 32–52). These latter were, in any case, banned and suppressed. Civil associations, trade unions and professional associations were either banned or incorporated into the state or its unique party. People were then deprived of avenues of organisation and association to further interests, ideologies and social presence. As such, individuals and groups were pushed into informal and personalistic networks of kinship and patronage, linking them to government bureaucracy and to nodes of the 'black economy' from which they could benefit. Diane Singerman (1995), among others, has argued that the common people in Egypt do participate actively in politics, but a particular type of politics, that of family, neighbourhood, the informal economy and their connection to state bureaucracy through patronage and mutual favours. This is strongly reminiscent of the 'pre-modern' and universal politics of personal salvation through allegiance to family, community and patrons, and is distinct from the modern politics of ideology and organisation.[19]

The demise of ideological parties was given another boost with the collapse of communism in the late 1980s, making leftist ideologies and models less viable. It also removed the Soviet camp as a source of inspiration and support to the secular left. That, together with the suppression or restriction of other parties and civil associations in most countries, opened the field for Islamic political activism. Although Islamic political parties or associations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, were also banned, their associations and networks could operate through various avenues of religion and charity, as well as banks and businesses, aided by connections to the oil-rich centres of Salafi Islam in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. These became particularly prominent in the *infitah* period from the

mid-1970s. From that time, and spurred by the Iranian Revolution, Islamic politics became the dominant genre and idiom in the region. Let us consider these politics in the light of the concepts of politics developed in the foregoing.

The diversity of modern Islamic politics

There is a tendency in public and media discourses in the West and elsewhere to assume Islamic politics to be unitary, all subsumed under the label of 'fundamentalism'. If any distinctions are to be made, then these are only between 'moderates' and 'extremists'. These labels hide a wide diversity of ideas and movements. First, we should note that, for the majority of Muslims in the world, Islam is not about politics, but about faith and observance. Politics may come into it when religious identity comes to define social groups or forces in conflict, much like 'Catholics' and 'Protestants' in Northern Ireland. What we see in the 'Islamic revival' of the late twentieth century is the rise of political movements drawing on Islam for identities and ideologies. This ideologisation of Islam is not new, but has been a feature of politics since the inception of modernity in the nineteenth century. For most of the twentieth century, however, with the secularisation of society and politics, Islamic politics as such constituted one element, often minor, among other, mostly secular, ideologies. The following section traces that history.

For the present, we should note that current Islamic movements and ideologies are diverse. We may see Islam as an idiom in terms of which many social groups and political interests express their aspirations and frustrations, and ruling elites claim legitimacy. We may distinguish a number of types of orientations in the Islamic politics of recent decades.

We may discern three broad and overlapping types of Islamic political orientations across the countries in the region. First, there is conservative or Salafi Islam (*salaf* means 'ancestors', so for its adherents it is the correct religion of the first Muslims), the orientation dominant in the Saudi establishment, but with a strong presence throughout the Muslim world. Its main emphasis is on authority, hierarchy, property, meticulous observance of rituals and correct conduct, including segregation of the sexes and the covering-up of women, and other strictures of family morality and propriety. Its general thrust with respect to rights is repressive, with a strong tendency to censorship of opinions and expressions. This orientation is political in that it seeks to influence government and policy towards the application and enforcement of religious law and morality, and towards regulation and censorship of the media, and of art and cultural products. This orientation is typical of the 'pious bourgeoisie' of businessmen, professionals and many clerics. There are some interesting parallels between this orientation and that of the Christian Evangelical right in the USA, which is also concerned to pressure the government into the enforcement of religious

observance and moral conduct. They share the desire to censor intellectual and cultural products that are judged contrary to religious teaching. They are both, for instance, opposed to the teaching of Darwinian evolutionism in schools. We see here an instance of affinities across supposed civilisational boundaries: it is a clash within, not between, civilisations.

The second type of orientation is radical and militant, typically pursued by young students and other sectors of alienated youth. It differs from the conservatives not so much in objectives, but in methods. While the conservatives seek Islamisation through influencing the government and controlling levers of power and communication, the radicals tend towards direct, often violent, action. They take the religious injunction to enjoin the good and forbid evil doing as a mandate to every Muslim to intervene forcefully in implementing religious precepts. This direct action applies especially to government and authority, which are seen as culpable in the neglect of the law and in corruption and laxity. The leading ideological influence on this trend is the thought of Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian militant executed in 1966, accused of armed sedition. He argued that any state that is ruled by man-made law and not by what God had decreed is an infidel authority, however much it might pretend to follow Islam. A society governed by laws other than those of God is equally errant. As such, the governments and societies of the Muslim world were not truly Muslim, but lived in a *jahiliyya*: a term used to describe the state of ignorance and barbarism that preceded Islam. It was the duty of true Muslims, then, to insulate themselves from this barbarism, to recruit followers, to entrench their strength in faith and in military training, and, in time, to come out to wage jihad against the infidel government and the non-believers, in order to reconquer the world for Islam, in imitation of the Prophet and his generation. Since then this has been the dominant creed of the militants throughout the region (Qutb 1990; Moussalli 1992).

The third type of orientation is reformist and modernist, typical of some intellectuals, professionals and modern businessmen. It seeks to Islamise government and society, but in the context of economic development, social reform and political democratisation. That is to say, it espouses a politics that goes beyond the moral and ritual agenda of the others. In some respects its cadres seek to continue the national projects of the previous nationalists and leftists, with an emphasis on economic and social programmes. This is the trend that is most concerned with questions of rights and democracy, and it comes to the fore wherever Islamism becomes part of a genuine pluralist electoral politics, primarily in Turkey, and in another form in Iran.[20]

The violent militants dominated the headlines in the 1980s in Egypt and in the 1990s in Algeria, with their outrages and massacres. In Egypt, a wide-ranging and intense repressive campaign by the authorities decimated the militants, killing, imprisoning and torturing many of them alongside members of their

families and neighbourhoods. By the mid-1990s their imprisoned leadership declared an end to hostilities. In Algeria the militants waged a civil war, which involved massacres of whole villages and outrages rivalled only by state security forces. They, too, were suppressed in the end. It should be noted that the decline or demise of the militants, while directly effected by government repression, was also aided by the fear and loathing of most sectors of the population faced with atrocity and disruption. In Egypt, for instance, in attacking foreign tourists they threatened the livelihood of the many Egyptians who were dependent on that industry. The conservative pious bourgeoisie and their clerics, while supporting the militants when they were attacking and assassinating secular intellectuals and artists, drew the line at the disruption of social order (Kepel 2002: 276–98).

Islamic politics in the twentieth century, then, was divided between many different orientations: conservative, reformist, liberal and radical. These combined in different articulations to the secular ideologies that dominated much of twentieth-century politics. Outright secularism in the Turkish Republic subordinated religion to a nationalist state and created unique combinations of religion and nationalism. Egypt, where religion was much more prominent in public life, saw many tendencies and patterns of Islamic activism. The Muslim Brotherhood, a modern Islamist political movement, emerged there in 1928, and has continued to feature in Egyptian political fields. Its policies and programmes have fluctuated with the times, from the nationalist, anti-colonial struggles of the first half of the century, to strands of 'Islamic socialism' in the 1950s and 1960s. It spawned radical and violent movements, which split from the mainstream during the 1970s. It has evolved into a party containing all the tendencies reviewed above, but with a dominant leadership advocating civil Islam and democracy.[21]

Iran presents a totally different picture of the articulation of religion to politics and the state. Positions on rights and citizenship have varied in relation to these positions and the political contexts.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, most Islamists had given up on the installation of an Islamic state by force or revolution.[22] Faced with repression and persecution by authoritarian governments, they have increasingly opted for campaigns for democracy and political participation. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, for instance, have been calling for political liberalisation and pluralism, apparently accepting other, non-Islamic political parties and forces as legitimate. The Turkish Islamic parties have long participated in elections and entered into coalition governments with other parties, based on political realism rather than ideological affinity. Their opponents, however, have questioned their democratic credentials, accusing them of using democracy to gain power, and, once gained, of subverting that democracy. The fact of the matter is that, although many people in the region now speak the language of democracy, including presidents, kings and shaykhs, there are few democrats in action. I shall argue in conclusion that democracy comes not from ideological

pronouncements, but from political institutions and processes that force parties into it.

The politics of global Islam

Recent decades have been marked by the emergence of the 'transnational' and 'global' phenomena. In relation to Islam and politics these have two distinct manifestations: global jihadism or the Afghan phenomenon, and transnational networks of migration. What they both have in common is an abstract notion of a global Islamic *umma*, superimposed on actual politics and social relations.

Global jihadism emerged from protracted conflicts in Afghanistan during the 1980s. With American and Saudi organisation and finance, a large number of Arab, Pakistani and other Muslim jihadis were recruited and trained to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. The departure of the Soviets in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the communist regime set the different jihadist groups fighting among themselves and destroying Kabul and other Afghan cities in the process. In the mid-1990s, the Taliban, this time with Pakistani and covert American support, emerged as the rulers of the country. The Arab jihadist camps continued to recruit and train, and after the Soviet defeat a traffic developed between these camps and the countries of the region, with the jihadis organising violent attacks in various countries. The most notable and protracted of this backwash from Afghanistan was the civil war in Algeria, but there were also important manifestations in Egypt and elsewhere. The Kuwait war of 1990–1 provided another focus for jihadism. American and other international forces (including those from Arab states) invaded the Gulf region to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait. American bases were established on the Arabian Peninsula, notably in Saudi Arabia: infidels in the home of the holy cities of Islam. The jihadists then focused their ire on the Americans and the Saudis who were first responsible for their creation. This was particularly important in Saudi Arabia, which espoused as its official ideology Wahhabi Islam, the same inspiration shared by the jihadists. These latter pointed to the laxity and corruption of the Saudi rulers and their subservience to the American infidels, now cast as the global enemy of Islam, and the allies and backers of the Israelis. A global battle was then postulated, between the theoretical Islamic *umma* and the Christian (Crusader) and Jewish enemies, but also Hindus and Sikhs in relation to Kashmir. The Al-Qaida phenomenon, not a coherent organisation but a loose association of jihadists, many trained in Afghanistan, but then freelancing in various cells all over the world, emerged from these events. The battle culminated in the 9/11 attacks in the US and the subsequent 'war on terror', including the invasions of Afghanistan and then Iraq by the Americans and their allies. The postulated global battle between Islam and the rest seemed to the jihadists and many other Muslims to be fully engaged. These events and the politics and ideologies they

engendered had profound repercussions for the other aspect of globalised Islam, the transnational communities.[23]

The transnational communities are the products of extended migrations in the latter decades of the twentieth century. The most interesting aspect for our discussion is the settlement of Muslims in European and American cities. There is now an extensive literature on Islam in Europe and in the West. These individuals and groups are diverse by ethnicity (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Turks, Maghrebis, Africans, Arabs and so on), by class and occupation and by religious and political orientations. There is not a uniform 'Muslim community', although communal leaders and some politicians would like to pretend that there is, so that they can speak for it. Some of those Muslims, though, partake of the notion of the universal *umma*, and this perception was strengthened by the events following 9/11 and the 'war on terror', which has posed threats and difficulties for many Muslims in the West. Prior to these events the results of many polls and studies in the various countries of Western Europe showed that about 70 per cent of Muslims were largely secularised, much like other Europeans, with some becoming 'cultural' Muslims, celebrating festivals and observing rites of passage. Of the observing 30 per cent, most were engaged in private piety and were not political Muslims. Those who were politically active as Muslims constituted a small minority, but a vocal one attracting sensational media attention. Following 9/11 these orientations have undergone various mutations.[24] Many more Muslims in Europe have developed religious sentiments and orientations to the virtual universal *umma*. There is a sense of Muslim solidarity in the face of a threatening world. A survey published in the British *Guardian* on 30 November 2004, found that 46 per cent of men and as many as 68 per cent of women reported that they prayed every day, but it is, of course, difficult to know how much of this self-reporting of piety is for media consumption.

In relation to politics most Muslims in Europe remain inactive. Those who are active vary in orientation from the politics of their country of origin (especially marked among Turks) to the politics of the country of residence. Many Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Britain have become active in mainstream party politics, with leading figures standing for public office, as are many Turks in Germany. Their concerns are mainly practical, to do with the distribution of public goods, of education and of housing and policing, for instance. But ideological issues, notably that of the *hijab* in France, have played an important role. Questions of foreign policy have also come to the fore in recent years, especially with the military interventions in Afghanistan, and then Iraq. With numbers reaching upward of five million Muslims in France and three million in Britain, Muslims have become an important item in electoral calculations for the parties.

A majority of European Muslims are disadvantaged, in the lower rungs of employment and pay and disproportionately represented among the unemployed

(for Britain, see *The Guardian*, 30 November 2004). This reinforces the sense of alienation from mainstream society, especially felt by the young, who also suffer disproportionately from racism and the hostility to Muslims following 9/11. France is where such youths, living in slum suburbs (*les banlieues*) of Paris and the main cities, rioted violently in 2005, causing a national crisis. It is significant that the grievances of those rioters were framed in terms of economic and social demands, with particular objections to repressive policing, rather than in terms of religious ideologies or solidarities. The International Crisis Group 2006 report on these events in the context of the transformations of the politics of Muslims in France concluded that there was a process of depoliticisation of Muslims, after the political surges of the 1980s and 1990s, of which the riots were one manifestation. The political and religious associations, some encouraged by the French government as official interlocutors, had become ever more distant from ordinary Muslims, especially the young. The political Islam, led mostly by offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood, became more integrated into official institutional structures, respectable and recognised by the state as interlocutors on Islam. The report distinguished a number of orientations of Muslims in depoliticised direction. It highlighted two strands of Salafism: 'shaykhist' and jihadist. The first is a pietistic orientation emphasising observance and ritual, fostered by Wahhabi clerics from Saudi Arabia, with their funds and mosques. It discourages political participation in favour of individualised piety. Jihadism, as we have seen, is the violent face of Salafism, emphasising equally observance and distance from non-believers, but with active hostility towards the latter as enemies of Islam. Riots are forms of spontaneous and equally apolitical response. All these orientations are distinct from the communal and ethnic Islam of the earlier generations, and the political Islam of the 1990s. Some Muslims are receptive to the appeal of jihadist Salafism, and the idea of a universal confrontation between Islam and the West. Much of this receptivity remains at the level of sentiment, and only a few of them progress into organisation and action. Radical and jihadi groups are recruiting among this minority. However, an interesting phenomenon is that they are also successful among converts to Islam, especially those from other disadvantaged groups, notably Afro-Caribbean youth in Britain. The young radicals of immigrant origins are mostly second and third generations. As such they are culturally integrated into the life of the host community, having been through the education system and being able to speak the language like natives. They are mostly alienated from the ethnic cultures of their parents. The radical Islam they embrace is not that of their parents, but a de-ethnicised, de-territorialised Islam, with Salafi or Qutbist ideas and motifs. Equally, many of the educated middle-class Muslims, in so far as they believe and practise, embrace a modernist reformed Islam with universalistic orientations, distinct from the ethnic Islam of their parents. It is important to note, then, that Islamic affiliations, whether radical or liberal, are typically modern and individualised,

and distinct from the conservative and communitarian Islam of the older generations, which leans towards traditional ethnic orientations. These modern orientations do not represent a 'clash of civilisations' with the West, but constitute part of the ideological diversity of the West (Roy 2004: 100–200).

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been on the modes and mutations of the articulation of Islam as belief, institutions and communities in political processes in Middle Eastern society. The recurring theme is that of the transformations of modernity and in particular the emergence of political modernity. We have seen the various modes in which Islam enters this modernity, mostly as part of it rather than as a 'traditional' reaction. A regular theme is the 'materiality' of religion, not in the common sense of 'material explanations' of belief and practice, but in the sense that these are embedded in social relations and institutions, intimately involved in power, property and law.

One crucial aspect of modernity is the process of secularisation. We have distinguished between 'secularisation' in the sense of social processes, and 'secularism' as an ideology favouring the separation of religion from politics and public life. The social processes are those of the differentiation of social institutions and functions from religious institutions and authorities. A prominent example in both Christianity and Islam is the differentiation of law and its institutions from the religious sphere. Even when elements of the *shari'a* were incorporated in modern legal systems, this has occurred within the positive codified law of the modern state, torn out of its old anchor in madrasas, books of fiqh, Qadi courts and Mufti authority. The exceptions to this pattern, in Saudi Arabia, and partly in Iran, appear as tense anomalies. Law becomes subject to state legislation rather than the exegesis of religious jurists. In the field of education, too, in most of the countries of the region, religion becomes a specialised subject in an otherwise secular curriculum. We saw how the political field and its actors were largely secularised in the course of the twentieth century. These processes are highly pertinent to modern politics in the region. Much of the Islamic advocacy consists in the demands for the injection of greater religious content into those spheres of public life, as well as the moralisation of public space. On the other side, exemplified by Islamic Iran, the attempt to impose religious strictures on a secularised society is strongly resisted. In both cases the processes of secularisation are firmly embedded in the fabric of modern society, and attempts at Islamisation are superimposed as a surface spray over this fabric.

Finally, the guiding principle of the discussion is that Middle Eastern societies do not constitute a kind of Islamic exceptionalism to which the concepts and arguments of the social sciences do not apply. We have shown throughout that there are many parallels between European Christianity and Middle Eastern

Islam in their articulations towards society and politics. The main divergence comes with the development of capitalist modernity in North West Europe, and the processes and events that that entailed, including colonial domination and its aftermath. Capitalist modernity reached the Ottoman lands within this context of domination, and the traces of this origin continue to have a prominent presence in their politics and ideologies, as they do in many other parts of the world.

Summary of chapter

The pre-modern forms of politics in the Middle East were characterised by intra-elite transactions and contests over resources extracted from the economically active classes in agriculture, craft and trade. The political action of these classes was largely confined to the support of one elite faction or another, in accordance with considerations of patronage and advantage. Intensification of fiscal oppression and the rise of prices of basic foods could lead to riots by subordinate classes, but these were sporadic and did not lead to any forms of lasting organisation. Religion entered into these forms of politics in various ways, most prominently in its material aspect. Many elements in the economy and politics of the pre-modern city were constituted and dominated by religious institutions and personnel. Another aspect of religion in pre-modern politics was that it provided a vocabulary of legitimacy and justice, in terms of which different parties could articulate justifications and challenges, with rhetorical appeals to divine law. Yet another aspect was religious community as a marker of identity and solidarity when conflicts arose along sectarian lines. Conflicts and struggles were aimed at replacing one faction, one prince or one dynasty by another, rather than at the reform or transformation of the political *system* itself.

By contrast, modernity in politics has involved precisely a conception of such systemic transformations, specified in terms of political theory and ideology. It has involved the organisation of activists in ongoing political organisation, mobilising sectors of the 'common people' for political ends. Membership is typically on the basis of ideological conversion and common interest rather than allegiance to a kin group or a master patron. These pre-modern forms have, of course, persisted into modernity in many parts of the world, and exist side by side with political modernity in various combinations.

Reforms and social transformations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the retreat of religious institutions and personnel from many political, social and cultural spheres, including law and education. New middle and professional classes with European education and languages assumed elite positions and constituted the main personnel of the political and cultural fields. Social movements and political parties developed as bearers of modern ideologies of nationalism, left and right, in which religion may or may not have been assigned a role. Some rulers attempted to counter the radical potential of this type of constitutional politics from below by appeal to religion and tradition, calls that found ready responses among the losers of modernity: some of the religious classes and the poor disadvantaged by the incorporation into capitalist markets. Much of oppositional politics was nationalist and directed against Western powers and their clients, which was sometimes expressed in terms of religious resurgence. This was the birth of modern political Islam, which took its place alongside secular nationalism, socialism and sometimes fascism, and

participated in the new political fields in the form of modern social movements, despite the appeal to the past and tradition.

Questions

1. What are the features of political modernity, and what distinguishes it from pre-modern forms of politics?
2. Which institutions dominated the economic and political life of pre-modern Muslim cities, and what forms did political struggles take?
3. What roles did religion play in pre-modern urban politics? When and how did changes in these roles occur?
4. What transformations of political organisation and mobilisation did the advent of modernity bring? Give a few examples, detailing episodes of the process.
5. What were the chief features of the Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman Empire?
6. Outline explanations of the Iranian Revolution of 1979.
7. Distinguish types of modern Islamic politics in the Middle East.
8. Discuss the political aspects of transnational Islam, the militant as well as the non-militant varieties, in recent times. How can the turn to religion among immigrant youth in Western Europe be explained?

Notes

1. For an account of this hierarchy, see Gibb and Bowen (1957: 122–6) and Faroqhi et al. (1994: 556–61); an illustration of positions, careers and 'nepotism' is afforded by a biography of Ebussu'ud, the Shaykh al-Islam of Suleyman, in Imber (1997).
2. For an example of *awqaf* in an Ottoman city and its politics, see Van Leeuwen (1999); for accounts of *awqaf* in more recent times, see Bilici (ed.) (1994).
3. On judicial institutions, see Gibb and Bowen (1957: 123–37), Faroqhi et al. (1994: 556–61) and Zubaida (2003: 60–6).
4. See the studies in Lifchez (1992); see further Birge (1937: 13–14), Barnes (1986), Quataert (2000: 161–3) and Zubaida (2003: 104–7).
5. Najib Mahfuz's novel *Malhamat al-harafish* (1977) presents a vivid picture of life and politics in the old urban quarters, illustrating the role of local Sufi orders and their shaykhs in local politics.
6. See the classical study of the Mahdiyya by Holt (1970).
7. See Makdisi (2000) for an analysis of these events in Lebanon; Fawaz (1994) on Lebanon and Damascus.
8. On the politics of Aleppo in the eighteenth century, see Thieck (1985) and Marcus (1989).
9. On the economic, legal and administrative transformations in Ottoman lands, see Mardin (1962), Quataert (1994, 2000), Deringil (1998), Berkes ([1964] 1998) and Zubaida (2003: 121–57). On Iran, see Algar (1969), Keddie (1981) and Abrahamian (1982).
10. The classic work on the Young Ottomans and their milieu is Mardin (1962).
11. On Abdulhamid's reign, see Deringil (1998).
12. This is part of the continuing vitality of the bazaars in Iranian cities to the present. See Abrahamian (1982: 432–3) and Mottahedeh (1985: 345–56).
13. On the Young Turks, or Committee for Union and Progress, see Ahmad (1969).

14. For accounts of Iranian politics, society, and religion from the later nineteenth century, see Keddie (1966, 1972), Algar (1969) and Martin (1989).
15. On the politics of the Mossadegh era, see Abrahamian (1982: 261–80) and Katouzian (1999)
16. For accounts of this episode, see Algar (1972) and Moin (1999).
17. There is a vast literature on the Iranian Revolution and the Islamic Republic. See particularly Keddie (1981), Arjomand (1988), Abrahamian (1993) and Zubaida (1993: 1–63).
18. See Batatu (1978: 709–925), Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett (1990) and Zubaida (1991).
19. See also Ismail (2006), for a study of popular and informal politics in modern Cairo.
20. For an expansion of this typology of Islamism, see Zubaida (2000).
21. The main account of the formation and development of the Muslim Brotherhood is Mitchell (1969). For subsequent developments, see Kepel (2002: 43–80, 276–98).
22. This claim was made forcefully by Olivier Roy as early as 1994 in his *The Failure of Political Islam*, and it was further developed by Roy (2004).
23. There is a voluminous literature on jihadism and the 'war on terror'; Roy (2004: 290–325) is one of the most cogent and informative; see also Jason Burke (2003).
24. For France, see the study by the International Crisis Group (2006), which suggests that a secular outlook is still dominant among Muslims in France (p. 5).

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CHAPTER 4

Islam, Modernity and the Politics of Gender

Deniz Kandiyoti

Islam, gender and modernity: Genealogies of a debate

Like all historical and political debates, diverse strands of engagement with Islam, gender and modernity have been a product of their times. It is commonly acknowledged that the 'woman question' that emerged at the turn of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was coloured by a persistent preoccupation with the effects of encounters with the West, either through direct colonial domination (as in Algeria and Egypt) or through the increasing encroachment of Western powers (as in the Ottoman Empire and Iran). Concerns with women's rights, centring around issues of education, veiling and polygyny, coincided with a broader agenda about 'progress' and advocacy for social reform. Mainly drawn from rising middle classes, culturally and economically integrated into the Western sphere of influence, Muslim reformers were opposed by those who felt marginalised and threatened by such encroachment. At the heart of the debates between reformers and their more conservative critics lay the issue of the compatibility of Islam with modernity, a concern that became pivotal to the political articulation of competing visions of society.[1] However, the routine invocation of colonial encounters as the midwife of both modernist reformism and conservative reaction singled the area of gender relations out as a central node in a broader ideological debate where notions of cultural authenticity (expressed through an Islamic idiom) were pitted against 'foreign' contamination (with modernisation being equated to Westernisation).[2] These tropes have exhibited remarkable resilience and longevity and have, if anything, experienced a revival in the wake of global Islamic resurgence and, more recently, the polarisation occasioned by the so-called war on terror.

Yet, the actual histories of modernisation and state-led reforms in the Muslim world have been remarkable in their diversity. After the First World War, the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Empire gave rise to two leading idioms for women's emancipation that were to leave an enduring legacy throughout the twentieth century: those of nationalism and socialism. These currents informed the early stirrings of feminism in the Muslim world, as elsewhere.[3] After the big wave of decolonisation following the Second World War, a period of state-led development gave rise to a variety of 'state feminisms', underwritten by educational and legal reforms. Post-colonial

nationalisms called upon women to contribute, as educated and enlightened 'citizens', to the national development effort. The social sciences, dominated at this stage by the modernisation and Marxist paradigms, offered accounts of transitions to modernity, with corresponding sociologies of gender and the family. The combination of these influences with a growing unease with Orientalist depictions of Muslim women and the desire to apprehend Muslim societies through the lenses of mainstream social-scientific analysis meant that references to Islam remained relatively muted until the 1970s (Kandiyoti 1996a).

This state of affairs was to change dramatically after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, likened by some to a seismic event that swept away the world view and predictions of modernisation theorists (Burke 1988). By the 1980s, the phase of state-led development in the Middle East was superseded by processes of structural adjustment and economic liberalisation that produced profound shifts in state–society relations with tangible implications in the realm of gender (Hatem 1992; Brand 1998). This period witnessed the rise of both Islamist oppositional movements and new forms of grass-roots activism, some aiming to palliate the dearth of social services to the poor and the downwardly mobile (Lubeck 2000; Bayat 2002). State elites seeking to bolster their flagging legitimacy, in their turn, resorted to alliances with Islamist social forces and to various forms of state-sponsored religiosity.[4] The effects of cold-war policies that sought to mobilise Islam as a bulwark against communism were most starkly felt in front-line states such as Afghanistan, where geo-politics took a direct hand in shaping jihadi resistance movements (Zubaida 2004). Islam was, once again, at the forefront of analyses and polemics. The issue of women's rights achieved particular prominence in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the United States and the ensuing military operations in Afghanistan. The plight of women under the Taliban became a *cause célèbre* that was presented both as the epitome of fundamentalist excess and as a humanitarian crisis justifying armed intervention. The politics of gender – which I define as a process of appropriation, contestation and reinterpretation of positions on gender relations and women's rights by state, non-state and global actors – acquired a new and potentially pernicious twist when blueprints for 'democratic' governance were ushered in by armed interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (Kandiyoti 2007a). The changing scholarly agenda thus inscribes itself against the backdrop of a highly charged geo-political context.

Diverse agendas, contending approaches

It is possible to identify several strands of scholarship on gender, Islam and modernity that reflect a plurality of analytic perspectives and political concerns. One strand is marked by a strong scriptural and textual focus shared by both conservative apologists and Muslim reformers attempting progressive readings

of canonical texts and of the early history of Islam. Ziba Mir-Hosseini (1999) makes a useful distinction in this respect between '*shari'a*-based' texts (usually written in local languages), whose primary aim is to provide an apologia for 'orthodox' Islam, and 'feminism-based' texts penned by women of Muslim background, written in English or French, that attempt a progressive reading of Islamic sources and practices.[5]

This engagement rests on the premise that Islamic law and history are the only legitimate terrain upon which a discourse of rights (and by extension of women's rights) can be based. Fatima Mernissi (1996: 92) was among the first to articulate this point of view: 'progressive persons of both sexes in the Muslim world know that the only weapon they can use to fight for human rights in general, and women's rights in particular, in those countries where religion is not separate from the state, is to base political claims on religious history.' This sentiment is echoed by Asma Barlas (2002: 3): 'Even if such readings do not succeed in affecting radical change in Muslim societies, it is safe to say that no meaningful change can occur in these societies that does not derive its legitimacy from the Qur'an's teachings, a lesson secular Muslims are everywhere having to learn to their own detriment.' Reformists point to the political urgency of exegetical reform and of renewal within the framework of Islamic legal thought. Not surprisingly, the Iranian debate has been the most heated, with positions concerning the potential for articulating a feminist agenda within an Islamic framework ranging from the guardedly optimistic to the unambiguously pessimistic.[6] With a strong focus on Islam as a normative framework, these contributions form the contours of a lively internal debate.

A second strand of more sociological approaches, which often draw upon cross-national comparisons, routinely points to significant deficits in Muslim-majority countries with respect to key indicators of development such as women's educational attainment, labour-force participation, political representation and general attitudes towards gender equality.[7] Accounts of these discrepancies vary. Moghadam (2003), who works from a political-economy perspective, refrains from presenting Islam as uniquely patriarchal but focuses, instead, on the complex range of economic, socio-demographic and political factors that condition these outcomes. She evaluates modernising states and state-led legal reforms in a broadly positive light, acknowledging their role in combating social conservatism and expanding women's choices. She argues, furthermore, that new constituencies of educated, professional women have mobilised in defence of their rights to greater equality in education, employment, political representation and the family.

Critics of state-led modernisation, on the other hand, point to the fact that reformist legislation affecting women was frequently sponsored by authoritarian and *dirigiste* regimes whose ultimate aim was to harness them more effectively to national developmental goals rather than empower them as civil society actors.

Moaddel (1998) argued, for instance, that post-colonial secular states acting as authoritarian ideological apparatuses monopolised culture production and, by eliminating pluralism, ultimately sowed the seeds of Islamic fundamentalisms (see also Hatem 1994). The experience of political modernisation was itself riddled with contradictions. One of the glaring fault lines in modern conceptions of citizenship in most Muslim societies was evident in the denial of full juridical status to women, who remained wards of their male kin with respect to some of the most fundamental rights in their persons: to marry, to work, to travel, or to be able to retain custody of their children upon divorce (Joseph 2000). Thus, personal-status codes derived from *shari'a* law routinely curtail and contradict the stipulations of equality embodied in most national constitutions.[8]

A related line of argumentation concerns the transformations that the *shari'a* itself underwent when it became subject to procedures standard to Western legislative enactment in the process of modernisation. Some suggest that the flexibility and fluidity attributed to Islamic law before codification by modern states were lost with the move to modern legislation (Messick 1993; Asad 2003: 227–8). The implications of this move for women's rights have, likewise, received mixed interpretations. Although the main thrust of family-law reform in the twentieth century was in the direction of protecting women's rights in the conjugal union (by setting minimum ages for marriage, ensuring women's consent, making unilateral divorce and polygyny procedurally more difficult, extending women's custody rights over children and strengthening conjugal ties at the expense of male agnates), some scholars have argued that *shari'a* law, as codified and applied by modern states, has congealed and consolidated many aspects of male privilege. Amira Sonbol (2003), for instance, has argued that, in the case of Jordan, selective borrowing from Hanafi and Maliki jurisprudence resulted in a modernised code combining the most patriarchal prescriptions of each school of law (see also Tucker 1998; Moors 1999; Mir-Hosseini 2000). Furthermore, far from being a narrative of steady progress towards the liberalisation of *shari'a*, family legislation in the twentieth century was marked by repeated (and successful) attempts to roll back the modest gains women had achieved. The contemporary histories of Iran, Egypt and Algeria provide ample illustration of this point (Paidar 1995; Sonbol 1996; Hatem 2000; Lazreg 2000).

A third strand of scholarship draws its inspiration from post-structuralist and post-colonial critiques of modernity. Without denying the fact that women may be included in society and public life in totally novel ways, some scholars express scepticism concerning the progressive claims of modernity with reference to women's emancipation (see, for example, the essays in Abu-Lughod 1998). This writing draws attention to the politics of modernity as a regulatory discourse creating new forms of subjection and exclusion. Thus, attempts to 'modernise' women may contain both emancipatory and disciplinary elements, especially in contexts where encounters with the West single women out as the repositories of

their societies' 'backwardness'. Afsaneh Najmabadi (2005) takes this argument even further by suggesting that, from the nineteenth century onwards, in the case of Iran, there was a radical transformation of gender and sexuality through a process of repressive 'heteronormalisation', whose sexual anxieties linger on.

Thus, when modernity – defined as a political project rather than an immanent process of social transformation – is recast as authoritarian and monolithic, resistance articulated in an Islamic idiom may be interpreted as an instance of subaltern expression or the emergence of counter-publics. For those who, like Göle, posit a Muslim *habitus* that is diametrically opposed to Western notions of corporeality and public presence, women's bodies and sexuality become a privileged political site for the expression of difference and resistance to Western modernity. However, the contemporary veiling movement, far from representing a retreat into tradition, is reinterpreted as part and parcel of an indigenously defined modernity that is reflexive in character to the extent that the codes and symbols associated with religion are critically appropriated and distanced from traditional culture (Göle 1996, 2002). Others, like Mahmood, reject the reduction of the resurgence of Islamic forms of modesty and sociability to an expression of resistance to the West, since this simplifies the nature of the subjectivities that are crafted through pietist movements involving Muslim women. Pietist discourse engages in a critique of identity politics (namely, forms of Islamic practice whose *raison d'être* is to signal an identity or tradition) to the extent that it does not have the ability to contribute to the formation of an ethical disposition. The cultivation of virtue, through various forms of embodied practice (such as veiling, praying and fasting), is at the very centre of the forms of agency deployed by pious women and must, therefore, be understood on its own terms (Mahmood 2004).

The detailed ethnographic work by Jenny White (2002) on grass-roots Islamist mobilisation in Turkey, on the other hand, suggests that Muslim social imaginaries and presentations of the self may themselves be fractured by class and gender and that the boundaries between secular and religious identities and sensibilities may, in fact, be far more fluid (see Navaro-Yashin 2002). Indeed, positing the radical alterity of pious subjectivities or, for that matter, of an assumed Muslim *habitus* may inadvertently freeze and reify what are continually evolving manifestations of identity. Ismail (2006), for instance, demonstrates that, in Cairo's deprived new urban quarters, the boundaries between pietistic and militant oppositional movements are fluid and porous and that both inform constructions of marginalised masculinities. This male marginalisation is set in the context of antagonistic relations with state institutions, involving violence and changes in women's roles both as breadwinners and as mediators of relations with the state.

What should be amply clear from the above is that, abstracted from the concrete historical and institutional contexts in which they are embedded and

vested with contested meanings, neither Islam nor modernity appears to be a viable analytic category for an understanding of the politics of gender. This contention will be illustrated, in what follows, by means of two seemingly antithetical cases with respect to state–society relations and the place of Islam: those of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Central Asia: Neither colonised, nor modern?

A focus on the Muslim majority republics of Central Asia helps to problematise both the meanings we attach to modernity and its links to the West. Indeed, colonisation and Westernisation, the two key terms of debates on gender and modernisation in the Muslim world, had a particularly complex and contested trajectory in Central Asia. The region was both colonised through Russian imperial expansion[9] and subjected to new forms of control by a non-capitalist metropolis after the victory of the Bolsheviks. The modernising encounter was not between the West and the 'Orient', however defined, but between a declining colonial power, uncertain about its own place of insertion into the historic West, subject to much soul-searching about its own backwardness, and diverse indigenous formations. The latter ranged from the sedentary populations of the great Islamic centres and urban settlements of *Mavera an-nahr* to the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of the steppes whose conversion to Islam came relatively late, merging Islamic practices with local beliefs and cosmologies (De Weese 1994; Privatsky 2001).

The modern identities of the Muslim peoples of the Empire were partly forged in an endeavour to respond to Russian representations of their societies and cultures from the middle of the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. This encounter prompted a small group of Tatar intellectuals to initiate a debate over identity that began around the middle of the nineteenth century and developed into a current of Muslim reformism known as Jadidism (Lazzerini 1994; Brower and Lazzerini 1997). It is within this reformist current that we find the first stirrings of advocacy for an expansion of women's rights (Khalid 1998). Critiques of the practice of polygyny, the poor treatment of women and their lack of education were central themes in calls for reforms aimed at achieving national renewal and progress. The Jadids clearly shared a common discursive universe with their contemporaries elsewhere in the Muslim world, consolidated through the circulation of people and ideas among a cosmopolitan community of Muslim intellectuals.

After the Bolshevik victory, the discourse of women's emancipation was appropriated by the CPSU to further very different ends. The destruction of traditional family structures and the refashioning of kinship systems had become central means towards the goal of socialist transformation and cultural revolution. Extending the reach of the state into areas that the Tsarist regime had

been content to leave alone, the Soviets intervened aggressively in the realm of 'custom' by criminalising and prosecuting a category of misdemeanours based on local traditions (*bytovye prestupleniia* or *byt*: literally 'way-of-life' crimes). By the 1920s the *shari'a* court system in force among sedentary populations and the customary law (*adat*) practised in nomadic areas was superseded by secular family law. Polygyny, under-age and forced marriage were outlawed, as was the payment of *qalin* (brideprice).[10]

Massell (1974) argued that women were enlisted as a 'surrogate proletariat' in a region that lacked an indigenous working class that could serve as a revolutionary vanguard. The episode known as the *hujum* (or assault) – the attack on veiling and the campaign of forced desegregation that started from 1927 – is the one that has received the most sustained attention by social historians.

Differences in interpretation of this key episode are indicative of numerous unresolved issues concerning the nature of Soviet modernisation. Working within a post-colonial theory framework, Northrop (2004) asserts that the Soviet Union, like its tsarist predecessor, was a colonial empire. He interprets the conflicts over the veil primarily as a story of colonial power and subaltern resistance. The Soviets set up an apparently insoluble dilemma for themselves by, on the one hand, defining the new Uzbek nation through distinctive patterns of female seclusion and domestic relations (by their distinctive *byt*) and, on the other hand, denouncing these same practices as primitive and oppressive. The impossibility of being both 'Uzbek' and 'Soviet' created a central contradiction that led to the 'utter, abject failure to transform gender relations, at least in the short run' (Northrop 2001b: 213).

However, scholars like Edgar (2004) working on Turkmenistan and Kamp (2006) working on Uzbekistan paint a more complicated picture. Edgar finds little evidence to support Massell's thesis that Central Asian women were treated as a 'surrogate proletariat', arguing, instead, that Soviet officials were inclined to tread cautiously from fear of alienating the patriarchal sensibilities of the regime's basis of support, namely poor and landless male peasants. Turkmen cadres were adept at utilising the language of class to counter demands for women's emancipation, forcing a choice between support for women and winning the favour of 'class-friendly' male elements. This text highlights both the centrality of gender relations to the reproduction of tribal society in Turkmenistan – hence the passions aroused by any tampering with the status quo – and the agency of local elites in shaping the institutions and discourse of nationhood in the 1920s and 1930s.

Kamp argues that the ideas that most profoundly shaped both male and female Uzbek activists expressed continuity with Jadid ideas about women's place in society, although these ideas were overtaken by the Bolshevik agenda. The massive backlash occasioned by the *hujum*, consequently, receives divergent interpretations. Unlike Northrop, who evaluates these tragic events through

the prism of anti-colonial resistance against the Russians, Kamp interprets the widespread murders, assaults and rapes perpetrated by Uzbeks against other Uzbeks as a predominantly internal struggle fuelled by a violent reassertion of patriarchal power (see also Massell 1974: 275–6; Keller 1998).

In a comparative evaluation of colonial policies, Edgar (2006) highlights the fact that, unlike the Soviet regime, Western colonial powers in Muslim lands refrained from interfering with the religious control of personal-status law and, more generally, from mobilising subject populations. Thus, interpreting Soviet modernisation solely through the prism of a colonial encounter between the Bolsheviks and the Muslims of Central Asia misses out on the revolutionary drive that was also calling local hierarchies into question. Edgar detects, instead, both similarities with state feminisms in the Muslim world and forms of anti-colonial resistance in responses to Soviet modernisation.

What is striking about these debates is that, although the question of whether Soviet modernisation could be equated with other forms of imperial domination became the subject of a heated controversy, the category of 'modernisation' itself was not sufficiently problematised. Martin (2001), who used Soviet nationality policies as a test case for an evaluation of the claims of the modernisation paradigm in relation to the Soviet Union, is an exception in this respect. The manner in which the Soviet state dealt with the national question was, in his view, what set it apart from other colonial encounters. The policy of affirmative action vis-à-vis titular nationalities in the Union republics was intrinsic to the Bolshevik decolonisation project, since Tsarist colonial oppression (and Great Russian chauvinism) was assumed to be responsible for the 'cultural backwardness' of the imperial borderlands. However, from the second half of the 1930s onwards the Soviet state began to propagate a crude form of primordialism that locked populations into ethnic (and class) designations, thus transforming the modern categories of class and nationality into ascribed social-status categories (Martin 2000). These policies had the overall effect of making ethnic belonging the single most important determinant of life options and the principal focus of social mobilisation and conflict. This, Martin argued, was not the result of the persistence of traditional values into the Soviet era but the unintended consequence of extreme Soviet statism.

The coexistence of two seemingly contradictory discourses in the literature on Central Asia betrays a subterranean unease on the question of modernisation. On the one hand, ideologically inspired celebrations of the achievements of Soviet policies spoke of dramatic progress and rapid social change. On the other hand, Soviet ethnographers lamented the immutability of local cultures, the relative lack of penetrative capacity of the Soviet state and the resilience of local social patterns. The hurdles on the way to full modernisation were described with reference to the concept of 'traditionalism' or 'survivals' of tradition. The domestic domain, and particularly the role of women within it, were singled out

as privileged sites for the perpetuation of tradition: a state of affairs that was seen as clearly inimical to the goals of socialist transformation.

I argued elsewhere (Kandiyoti 1996b) that, if the concept of 'traditionalism' has had an exceptionally long and productive career in Central Asia, this is partly because it served to hide from view some of the consequences of the Soviet system itself. The gendered effects of Soviet economic, demographic and anti-religious policies and their combination with socialist measures for the protection of women gave rise to what I term the 'Soviet paradox': women's high literacy and labour-force participation rates against the background of high fertility rates, large families and relatively untransformed domestic divisions of labour.

The Soviet command economy in the Central Asian republics gave rise to distinctive and well-documented patterns of ethnic stratification. The Slavic/European nationalities were mainly concentrated in urban areas and non-agricultural occupations, whereas the indigenous nationalities continued to be over-represented in the rural areas and in agricultural and pastoral occupations (Lubin 1984; Khazanov 1995; Sacks 1995). The effects of ethnic stratification were even more pronounced in the case of women of indigenous nationalities (Lubin 1981; Sacks 1995). A comparative survey of women's employment and fertility in socialist countries undertaken by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) inadvertently highlighted the uniqueness of Central Asian patterns (Anker 1985). Uzbekistan turned out to be the only case among the various socialist countries surveyed where the education–fertility connection did not appear to hold. Women had educational attainment levels similar to the industrialised socialist countries, with birth rates more comparable to those of developing countries of the South.

Soviet demographic policies were clearly implicated in these outcomes. The promotion of motherhood as a social duty, which was meant to address fertility shortfalls in the more industrialised republics, remained an explicit and enduring theme of Soviet social policy. These pro-natalist and maternalist policies sat well with the social value attached to large families in a predominantly rural Central Asia. Record numbers of Central Asian women qualified for the title of Heroine Mother (awarded to those with ten children or more) and Motherhood Glory awards (given to those with seven to nine children). The provision of public goods such as free kindergartens, schooling, health services and generous maternity leaves served to bolster these tendencies. Central Asian women's Soviet identities were powerfully shaped by expectations from the state for a range of benefits and entitlements supporting motherhood.

It was not until the debates preceding the 1981 Family Policy Law that concerns about regional disparities in population growth started to be expressed openly (Weber and Goodman 1981; Rywkin 1982; Feschbach 1986). The policies adopted did not involve any direct attempt at curbing population growth in

high-fertility areas but rather offered incentives for larger families in low-fertility regions. The issue of population control was, nonetheless, finally put on the political agenda. Indeed, around the time of *glasnost* in the late 1980s, the question of family planning emerged as an emotionally charged and highly politicised issue. The anti-family planning platform, articulated in the Central Asian press, expressed nationalist sentiments presenting large families and the maternal roles of women as items of cultural distinctiveness and integrity (Watters 1990).

In the economic sphere, the collectivisation policies of the 1930s had, according to Poliakov (1993), the paradoxical effect of giving a longer lease of life to traditional forms of social organisation in Central Asia by arresting the beginnings of agrarian capitalism stimulated by Russian colonisation. Roy (2000) invokes a similar paradox when he notes that the Soviet project of destroying traditional society via social engineering translated, in fact, into a recomposition of traditional solidarity groups within the framework of new Soviet institutions. The *awlad* (extended family), the *mahalla* (neighbourhood) and (among settled nomads) lineage segments were, in some cases, reincarnated as subdivisions of collective farms.

In terms of gender roles, collectivisation heralded a new focus on women as producers and a strong drive to draw them into the socialist labour force. Women were being called upon to be 'shock workers' as well as 'heroine mothers'. Raising women's labour productivity depended, in principle, on limiting the wasteful pursuit of time-consuming household maintenance activities – a promise that could hardly be fulfilled in the absence of labour-saving devices, with inadequate amenities and a rigid sexual division of labour.

Obligations to perform 'socially useful' labour were, therefore, experienced as an onerous burden by the rural majority in Central Asia engaged in compulsory collective agricultural work. Lubin (1981) estimated that in the 1970s the majority of those working outside social production in Uzbekistan (around 12–15 per cent of the able-bodied population) were women and that most of the employed were engaged in low-level jobs, even in the health sector, where they were well represented. Iconographic depictions of women in non-traditional occupations, driving tractors and handling heavy machinery, bore little relation to the highly gender-segmented labour market in Central Asia, where, unlike the rest of the Soviet Union, major untapped reserves of female labour could be found (Lapidus 1982; Patnaik 1989).

Finally, the Soviet campaign against Islam produced its own contradictions (Braker 1995; Ro'i 1995; Keller 2001; Khalid 2007), with a strongly gendered subtext. One of the aims of successive anti-religious campaigns was to create a clear line of demarcation between small-scale domestic rituals and folk practices, on the one hand, and any kind of observance that invoked the authority of organised religious institutions or public expressions of religiosity, on the other. Official Islamic learning and observance were tightly regulated by the Spiritual

Directorate for the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM), established in 1943, an institution sometimes used as a bridgehead of Soviet diplomacy towards the Muslim world during the cold-war period (Malashenko 1993). This contributed to the increased 'privatisation' of religious practice and its relegation to the domestic domain. Khalid (2007: 114) observes that, paradoxically, the anti-religious campaign in Central Asia served to preserve aspects of customary Islam that came under sustained attack in other parts of the Muslim world during the twentieth century.

Women's close association with the domestic domain and the fact that their activities more readily escaped the scrutiny reserved to men's more public pursuits positioned them as privileged custodians of local custom and ethnic/national identity (Tett 1994; Tohidi 1998). In Uzbekistan, women ritual specialists, the *otin*, kept the transmission of Islamic knowledge alive by providing informal religious instruction to girls and officiating at women's gatherings marking important life events (births, marriages and funerals) and religious feasts (Fathi 1997). Ritual life, communal participation, sociality and mutual help combined seamlessly in the everyday lives of Central Asian women and continue to do so (Kandiyoti and Azimova 2004).

Against this background, the message of women's emancipation was most readily assimilated into and equated with expectations of entitlements and benefits from the state to assist women in the performance of their maternal and communal duties. These expectations resonate with both the more general observations of Verdery (1996) on the gender regime of socialism – a regime that substitutes social protection and state paternalism for civic rights – and the characteristics of Central Asian societies discussed above. The ease with which discourses about women's 'natural destiny' and invitations to return to 'traditional' roles fell into place in the post-Soviet period is less surprising when we consider the specific trajectory of Soviet 'modernisation'.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the newly independent Central Asian states embarked upon 'nationalising' policies ranging from language policies and revised national histories, geared to consolidating the hegemony of their respective titular nations, to new iconographies for successor regimes (Smith et al. 1998). The promotion of national values explicitly targeted the family and gender relations. This was not a uniquely Central Asian phenomenon, for it also reflected broader currents across the post-communist world, where neo-familial ideologies, critical of Soviet-style emancipation and advocating a return to 'traditional families', were plainly in evidence (e.g. Kuenhast and Nechemias 2004).

In Central Asia this reassessment of the Soviet legacy was preceded by a period of Islamic revival that started in the late Soviet period in Uzbekistan and achieved full-blown expression during *perestroika* at a point when the ideological monopoly of the Soviet state was on the wane. New openings to religion

culminated in a schism between 'conservative' and more 'fundamentalist' currents of thought among the ulama and their followers. Influenced by increased contacts with the Muslim world, some took a more purist stance vis-à-vis local customs (which were denounced as un-Islamic) and were insistent on establishing a way of life based on a strict interpretation of the *shari'a*. However, whatever their doctrinal divergences, when it came to the question of women's place in society and the family, conservatives and fundamentalists concurred on equally negative views about gender equality (Babadjanov 2004).

Above and beyond the pronouncements of religious authorities and their more radical opponents, a more diffuse but persistent circulation of conservative gender ideologies started emanating from post-independence states. The secular rulers of successor regimes were themselves eager to display their allegiance to the faith. Islam was celebrated as part of a glorious national heritage and leaders demonstrated their personal piety by performing the *hajj* or taking oaths on the Qur'an (Olcott 1995). The rapid building of mosques and madrasas served as a sign of national rebirth. In Uzbekistan, by the time Islamic militancy had become associated with threats from extremist groups aiming to destabilise the regime, the government was at pains to distinguish between the local (national and therefore benign) and the foreign (transnational and therefore perilous) expressions of Islam. A new focus on Islamic observance as a possible signifier of political extremism brought the issue of women's veiling, which is now banned, to the forefront again. The government of Uzbekistan responded by attempting to police the boundaries between acceptable national dress (the colourful headscarf leaving the face bare) and 'transnational' veiling (or what is considered as 'Arab' or foreign dress) signifying an expression of extremism or 'Wahhabism', a loosely utilised but politically charged expression in common use in the region (Abramson 2004).

The bid to contain religious practice by making it conform to an emergent 'official' national ideology, which is itself patriarchal in form and content, renders the boundaries between so-called secular and Islamic moralities and expectations blurred and indistinct. After the break-up of the Union, the successor elites of Central Asian states had independence thrust upon them in the absence of significant anti-Soviet mobilisation. These elites, nonetheless, embarked upon a search for ideologies of national independence that centred around a denunciation of their colonial legacies. The privileged locus of 'de-sovietisation' was sought in the realm of culture and loss of culture (through Russification) was singled out as one of the principal injuries of Soviet rule. Calls for the return of women to roles more in keeping with their 'natural destiny' started circulating in the local secular press, apparently eliciting little overt reaction. The distribution of welfare benefits by *mahalla* (neighbourhood) committees, which replaced universal welfare provision with targeted assistance for the poor, appeared to discriminate against divorcees and single mothers, pointing to the increasingly

disciplinary roles assumed by public bodies in enforcing conventional gender norms (Kamp 2004).

However, presenting self-conscious manipulations of markers of national identity as a 'revival of tradition' is a clear misnomer. Whilst reclaiming 'tradition', successor elites have been presiding over profound transformations of post-Soviet society. These include new patterns of social stratification with rapidly growing disparities in wealth between the 'new rich' and the 'new poor', accompanied by popular perceptions of rampant corruption, the erosion of social safety nets and increasing rates of internal and international migration and urbanisation. The increase in polygynous unions, which are not legal but becoming more commonplace, appear to have less to do with a return to Islamic mores *per se* than with cashing in on the privileges of newly found wealth.[11] It is not without irony that it is at the point when so-called traditional values are being talked up that the material bases of communal solidarity that were able to survive, albeit in modified form, during the Soviet period, are being tested to the limit.

There is little doubt that retreat of the Soviet state facilitated an official restoration of male privilege as an item of national culture. In Kyrgyzstan, the decriminalisation of polygamy has already gone before parliament several times. The increase of non-consensual bride-kidnapping in Kazakhstan is explained by Werner (2004) with reference to the withdrawal of the state from gender-sensitive social issues and new social attitudes towards Kazakh national traditions promoted by the state. Kamp (2006) also suggests that the Soviet state had the ability to intercede in favour of women and that state paternalism replaced the formerly untrammelled authority of individual patriarchs, while Akiner (1997) remarks on a new lack of restraint in expressions of male supremacy that were generally kept in check as politically incorrect under the Soviet regime.

However, the demise of the Soviet state cannot, in and of itself, explain this apparent transformation of gender discourses. Soviet policies in Central Asia had the paradoxical consequence of both expanding opportunities for women's education and public presence and stalling processes of occupational and spatial mobility commonly associated with modernity. The rural character of Central Asian societies was consolidated through their mode of incorporation into the Soviet Union, collectivisation reconfigured and sometimes entrenched traditional forms of social organisation, pro-natalist policies, that were meant to address the demographic shortfalls of the more industrialised republics, supported high-fertility norms in Central Asia and the onslaught against Islam tightened the association between religion and ethnic identity by binding religion more closely to the domestic sphere. In short, there was a great deal more to the assumed 'traditionalism' attributed to Central Asian societies than could be explained with reference to either anti-colonial resistance or a supposed failure of modernisation.

A corollary of these observations is that the uncritical espousal of the notions of 're-traditionalisation' and 're-Islamisation' to account for post-Soviet developments yields relatively limited insights. National traditions are being actively reinvented and self-consciously deployed to serve new ideological purposes. Discourses on national independence perform a dual function. They attempt to distance new regimes from their Soviet past by casting it as a colonial encounter that repressed a national essence that is now being revitalised. They also strive to create new imaginaries of the nation that enhance social solidarity in increasingly fractured societies. Gender plays a central role in both these processes. The official restoration of culturally sanctioned age and gender hierarchies signals 'de-Sovietisation' in a context where the language of women's emancipation was appropriated by the Soviet state. The populist appeal of acquiescence to hierarchy in the family is implicitly harnessed to the vision of a harmonious, law-abiding citizenry thriving under the guidance of the father of the nation. The Islamic revival in Central Asia, that peaked during *perestroika* and achieved broader appeal after independence, introduced an arena of doctrinal and political contestation between different actors where state actors themselves attempt to appropriate Islam as national heritage to upstage more radical oppositional tendencies.

The successors to Soviet-era agents of modernisation appear to be international aid agencies, with their platforms of market reform and democratic governance, and the various international and local NGOs they support. An analysis of 'international assistance' encounters and of the blueprints they bring to issues of gender equality must remain outside the scope of this chapter. However, it must be clear that confrontations between transnational 'technocratic' feminisms, government policies and local and transnational Islamic tendencies in Central Asia are partly being played out on the terrain of gender relations.

Afghanistan: The society without the state?

Two episodes of violence against women, separated by over two decades, point to the changing stakes around the politics of gender in Afghanistan. The first, sensitively related by Edwards (2002: 167–73), took place in 1980 during the *mujahidin* resistance against the Soviet invasion. The second was reported from the province of Badakhshan in April 2005.

The incident in 1980 involved a Safi woman from the Pech Valley who pleaded with her husband, on leave from his military service, not to serve under the Soviet-backed Khalqi government but to join the jihad against the Soviet invaders, threatening to leave for exile without him. When her husband opted to return to the army, she decided to flee, asking a young paternal cousin to accompany her to Pakistan. They were captured on the way by the *Hezb-i*

Islami, one of the *mujahidin* factions, and returned to the *amir* of jihad of their place of origin. The matter was considered at the tribal council (where the narrator of the tale argued her case) but without reaching a final consensus. She was incarcerated pending a decision while the members of the tribal council dispersed to return home for the period of Ramadan. In their absence, the *amir* of jihad and the *Hezbis* who stayed behind lashed the boy (who was unmarried) and let him go but decided to stone the woman to death as punishment for *zina* (adultery). The narrator of this tale, a fellow Safi tribesman, was mortified that a mullah, who had lived in Saudi Arabia and was a total stranger to the locality, and an illiterate *amir* should pass judgment and pre-empt the decision of the tribal council. The use of religious law to contravene tribal custom and carry out the execution of one of their own against the expressed orders of the tribal council was particularly galling. The interference of Islamic parties, using the circumstances of jihad, had resulted in a humiliating disregard and subversion of tribal principles. This episode highlights the contending claims of parties who feel authorised to exercise legitimate control over women. The Safi woman, caught between the self-governing tribe and the self-appointed representatives of Islamic justice, paid the ultimate price, regardless of her motive: her avowed wish to join the jihad. The missing term of this narrative is, quite transparently, the rule of law as a projection of state power. Although agents of the state such as local courts or the forces of law and order are frequently biased, subject to capture by local elites, venal, or corrupt, their existence as relevant protagonists is frequently taken for granted. The history of their absence or their peripheral existence in Afghanistan has a direct bearing on the politics of gender.

The circumstances surrounding the killing of a 22-year-old woman in the province of Badakhshan in April 2005, also on the grounds of having committed adultery, are much less clear, despite extensive press coverage of this event. On the face of it, there were some superficial similarities with the case of the Safi woman in so far as the man involved received a hundred lashes and, again, was set free, while the woman was killed by her husband and his relatives. What is more noteworthy than the specific details of this case is the set of reactions that it triggered. Whereas the stoning of the Safi woman was a local incident that probably went unnoticed except by its main protagonists, the killing in Badakhshan provoked an immediate response from international human rights organisations, the media and Afghan civil-society activists. These latter signed a joint declaration, endorsed by twenty-six women's NGOs, condemning the murder as a barbaric act. The text of this declaration made an appeal to the Afghan Constitution (ratified in 2004 and which grants all citizens, male and female, equal rights before the law), to Islamic *shari'a* and to the obligation of the state to protect its citizens and comply with the standards set by international human-rights conventions. It placed the incident in Badakhshan firmly in the

category of 'harmful and outdated customs', explicitly dissociating it from Islam, and calling upon the state to act as a guarantor of women's human rights.

The multiplicity of actors – both local and global – reacting to this episode points to a reconfiguration of the stakes around the politics of gender in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Yet, it is neither entirely clear who the champions of women's rights are nor why Islam is routinely invoked both by those advocating the expansion and safeguard of women's rights and those who vehemently oppose such initiatives. It must be clearly acknowledged at the outset that interest in the plight of women in Afghanistan was transparently laden with geo-political concerns. One of the consequences of the furore over Taliban policies – and of the appropriation of women's rights advocacy by Western powers – was that debates took on an increasingly polemical hue, drowning out the painstakingly achieved scholarly advances in our understanding of the historical and contextual complexities of gender in the Muslim world. Operation Enduring Freedom, which led to the overthrow of the Taliban, far from inspiring an unqualified response of international feminist solidarity provoked a spate of critical reactions triggered by the perceived instrumentalism behind the invocation of the protection of abused Afghan women (e.g. Moghadam 2000a; Abu-Lughod 2002; Hirschkind and Mahmood 2002; Lindisfarne 2002; Stabile and Kumar 2005).

Widespread scepticism was certainly fuelled by the broad consensus over the effects of US-backed cold-war policies that channelled support to *mujahidin* groups to resist the Soviet invasion of 1979. The social and political effects of successive interventions establishing the ascendancy of Islamist parties backed by a variety of foreign patrons were successfully obfuscated, helping to perpetuate a 'cultural' framing of gender relations, a point eloquently made by Abu-Lughod (2002). Abuses of human rights, including extreme forms of gender-based violence, were strategically overlooked, until the eventual victory and mounting abuses of the Taliban regime finally led to the events of 9/11 and the ensuing 'war on terror' (Moghadam 2002a, 2006; Niland 2004). Lindisfarne (2002: 413) noted that it was during the *mujahidin* period that gendered inequality and violence became naturalised as intrinsic to 'Afghan culture' and 'Afghan Islam'. As overwhelming evidence about the wide-ranging social transformations occasioned by over two generations of conflict and the ravages of a war economy kept mounting, the tendency to consign gender relations to an unchanging (and under-theorised) realm of culture, which included nebulous references to Islam, continued unabated.[12]

It is against this background that I propose to subject the case of Afghanistan to closer historical scrutiny. In particular, I single out the manner in which Islam and its institutions were incorporated into the process of modern state-building; the extent to which the modern state was able to penetrate and transform diverse subnational entities and kin-based communities and the effects of the

politicisation of women's rights through transnational influences (see Kandiyoti 1991a).

Women's movements and 'state feminisms' in Muslim majority countries have historically been part of processes of national consolidation in the context of post-dynastic or post-colonial state-building. State-led modernisation has, likewise, been the prism through which many scholars have evaluated attempts to expand women's rights in Afghanistan. At the turn of the twentieth century, the currents of pan-Islamism, anti-colonialism and nationalism were imported by 'Young Afghan' intellectuals such as Mahmud Tarzi, who returned from exile in Ottoman Turkey and went on to introduce a new press (the influential newspaper *Siraj al-Akhbar*, between 1911 and 1919). Like his contemporary Muslim reformers and modernists, Tarzi supported the cause of women's advancement and education and favoured progressive interpretations of religious texts, setting up a tension between the new intelligentsia and the clergy (much in the way of the Jadids of Central Asia referred to earlier).

The idiom of 'modernisers' (centralising state elites) versus 'traditionalists' (ulama and a rural and tribal periphery) became firmly established in discussions of social conflict in Afghanistan.[13] The fact that two attempts at radical reform instigated from above first during the reign of King Amanullah between 1924 and 1928 and under the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) between 1978 and 1979 were followed by bloody uprisings and a violent backlash that swiftly targeted women's attire and mobility lent substance to the notion that the status of women acted as a symbolic node for articulations of modernist intentions or traditionalist reaction (Zulfacar 2006; Suhrke 2007).

Yet, it is also widely acknowledged that both the Islamist and communist movements that were locked in struggle from the constitutional period onwards (1963–73) were themselves the product of a process of modernisation that featured the expansion of secular education and the advent of new urban strata. Radical Islamist and communist movements mainly drew their cadres from a new middle-class stratum of Kabul university graduates, self-educated members of the lower middle class, and senior and lower-rank government officials. It is, therefore, necessary to achieve greater clarity on the precise meanings attributed to modernisation in the Afghan context. I would like to unpack this concept further by focusing on three central conundrums of state-building in Afghanistan that have a profound bearing on both the discursive possibilities and the latitudes for policy action on questions of women's rights. These are, in turn, the unresolved tensions between state-building and nation-building, the constantly shifting but consistently central place of Islam with regard to the legitimacy of rule and the limited capacity of the central state to extract resources, deliver benefits and enforce law and order.

The concepts of nation and citizenships are highly contested and elusive in the Afghan context. While some argue that considerable progress had been

achieved in the creation of a national state prior to the Marxist seizure of power in 1978, others maintain that the nation-state framework was a fabrication that sat ill with the realities of Afghan society. Kakar (1978: 202) noted that there was a genuine period of nation-building during the constitutional period. 'No longer was national politics pursued effectively in terms of region, religion, tribe or kinship affinity. The various modern types of political ideologies and alignments transcended these traditional lines.' Before the dislocation occasioned by years of protracted conflict, the bonds of citizenship were arguably strengthened through education, inter-marriage and service in the national army at the expense of ethnic/tribal affiliation (Wardak 2004). Edwards (1996: 4), on the other hand, draws our attention to 'the absence of a moral discourse of statehood shared by the majority of its citizens', which, alongside external influences, accounts for the incoherence and fragmentation of the polity. Saikal (2004), likewise, interprets the various modern ideologies espoused by consecutive state elites (such as constitutionalism and socialism) as a thin veneer over an untransformed political culture constituted by implicit beliefs, kinship norms, codes of accepted behaviour and hierarchies of identity. The weakness of the national bond outside the capital and urban centres was noted by several scholars, who suggested that the supranational *umma* (the community of believers) and the subnational *qawm* (tribe) constituted more salient registers of identity (various contributions in R. Tapper (ed.) 1983).

The genealogies of the modern state are clearly crucial. Barfield (2004) reminds us that, under Abdur Rahman Khan (1880–1901), considered the founder of the modern Afghan state, the subjugation of all autonomous groups took place by means of a British-subsidised army that centralised power in Kabul and made the government Pashtun rather than merely dynastic. The Pashtunisation policies that were intrinsic to state-building are held responsible by some for sowing the seeds of social fragmentation (Shahrani 1988, 1998). Furthermore, the penetration of the central government into rural peripheries arguably created an even greater gulf between the representatives of the state, operating through a range of local intermediaries (such as *malik*s, *khan*s and *arbab*s), and the masses, since the former were generally seen as predatory and corrupt. Roy (1986: 10) even argued that the uprisings against the communist regime, which broke out from 1978 and led to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, were directed 'as much against the state itself as against the Marxist government'. It is easy to concede, without having to take the argument that far, that the multiple fault lines of the Afghan polity finally imploded during the war years. It is not my intention to rehearse the various phases of conflict in the period following the Soviet withdrawal and leading to the ascendancy of the Taliban. Suffice it to say that the state was finally fragmented and bases of social power transformed as the economy changed from a subsistence and local trade economy into a warlord economy dominated by commercial agriculture (opium poppies) and

long-distance contraband (Rubin 2000). Afghanistan also experienced one of the largest recorded flows of refugees and internally displaced people. I shall not speculate, here, on the possible consequences of these transformations for the realm of gender relations (see Kandiyoti 2007b) but focus more narrowly on the changing political stakes around women's rights.

The *mujahidin* factions of the Northern Alliance, which had received the bulk of US assistance in the operations leading to the eventual overthrow of the Taliban, emerged as the strongest players on the eve of the Bonn Agreement in 2001, which laid the groundwork for the new Afghan state. This had a number of significant implications. These players, based on constituencies among northern and central ethnic groups – namely, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras – represented a mixture of ethnic claims mingled with those of politicised Islam. They were intent on resisting the reinstatement of Pashtun dominance, not only in the form of the Taliban, but also in the shape of a centralised governance apparatus based on a strong presidential system. That was an issue that was bitterly fought over in the process leading to the Constitution adopted in 2004 (Rubin 2008). Debates over the constitutional role of Islam – and the extent to which equal rights for men and women could be enshrined in legislation – became deeply entangled in the compromises between *mujahidin* factions and the new technocrats of an aid-dependent government: a dependence that brought with it, among other things, a request for compliance with legal international standard – setting instruments and their provisions for gender equality.[14] This led to a constitution with several potentially contradictory clauses, with the ulama retaining substantial powers of arbitration through their representation in the Supreme Court. The *mujahidin* parties, pressing their nationalistic credentials as the liberators of the country both from Soviet rule and from the Taliban, were able to accuse their detractors (including some women MPs, taking them to task over their human-rights record) with nothing short of treason. The constituencies pushing for an expansion of women's rights had an extremely weak hand to play, since they had little traction with the emerging power blocks and little legitimacy. They generally tried carefully to balance their demands either with reference to Islam (hence the dual invocation of the Constitution and the *shari'a* in the protests against killings referred to earlier) or, in more technocratic texts, with reference to the benefits of an educated, healthy and economically active female citizenry to national development.

The entanglements of Islam and state-building have been deep and complex in Afghanistan. Prior to Abdur Rahman Khan's centralising drive, the loose structure of the state meant that local religious leaders achieved considerable power and autonomy, especially in the tribal areas, albeit under the patronage of temporal rulers (Haroon 2007). Abdur Rahman Khan's role was paradoxical in that he undercut the autonomous power of the ulama, by organisationally subordinating them to the state and keeping their moral influence in check,

and simultaneously established Islam as a vehicle of legitimacy for temporal rule (Ghani 1978). The Amir also made use of the ulama to codify and propagate a form of Islamic knowledge that legitimated him as absolute ruler and commander of the faithful. This interpretation of Islam served as an ideology of state-building that transcended the parochial identities of tribe, ethnicity and community and served, in Olesen's view (1995), as a precondition for the secularisation of state and society. The suppression of local mechanisms for the settlement of disputes under the Amir and their replacement by *shari'a* courts was noted as a step that not only curtailed the power of tribal customary law but enhanced women's recourse to justice (Ghani 1983).

Clerical influence waxed and waned as successive rulers chose to confront the ulama (with disastrous consequences in the case of King Amanullah in the 1920s) or reached compromises with them (Gregorian 1969). The ulama retained the ability to mobilise in successive waves of protest against governments encroaching on their territory.[15] Legal reforms in Afghanistan had led to separate legal elites (Islamic law specialists trained in madrasas as well as experts in statutory law trained at the Kabul Law School) and a dual court system dealing with statutory and *shari'a* law (Kamali 1985). The Taliban represented a violent swing of the pendulum in favour of Islamic clerical rule, when all national legal codes were rescinded in favour of a restrictive application of the *shari'a* (Barfield 2003). It is important to note, however, that even at the height of state secularism under the PDPA, who in 1978 removed all religious references from government, it was not long before the government had to resort to the language and symbolism of Islamic legitimacy. Indeed, all the successive constitutions of Afghanistan (including the 1987 constitution framed by the communist government under Najibullah) endorsed the tenets of 'the sacred religion of Islam' and the principle that no law can contravene these tenets. Dorronsoro (2005) further remarks that, in comparison to the pre-war period, the ideological field was rendered homogenous by the jihad years, when Islamic ideologies achieved total hegemony and the differences between tendencies became harder to discern on some issues such as the status of women.[16] It would be erroneous, nonetheless, to evaluate the rule of the Taliban as a mere culmination of these trends. If, for the first time, the ulama dominated the political and military life of Afghanistan, this was, as Rubin (2000: 1796) cogently argued, the direct result of geo-politics and the resources made available by global flows. Many have suggested that both the social origins of the Taliban and their application of a puritanical Deobandi Islam constituted a significant break with patterns of everyday belief and rule in Afghanistan (e.g. Barfield 2005). This does not imply, however, that their successors would be prepared to countenance a regime sanctioning women's greater public presence and visibility, as many women parliamentarians and rights advocates would soon discover.[17] The reinstatement in 2006 of the notorious Ministry of Vice and Virtue, which had acted as a tool of

Taliban repression, attested to the power of constituencies interested in policing and enforcing Islamic morality.

These considerations may appear relatively trivial in a country where the vast majority of women have little contact with state organs, markets or civil-society organisations. Indeed, even the Taliban, who had the explicitly stated aim of transforming society, had limited impact on the lives of rural and nomadic (*kuchi*) women, except when they became direct targets of violence, as was the case during the capture of the Central Highlands. This leads us, yet again, to the crucial issue of the limited reach of the state. Although Afghanistan was never formally colonised, no central government could effectively survive and maintain political or social control throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries without foreign backing. The state remained consistently dependent on external revenues giving it the character of a rentier state with relatively weak engagement with society.[18] The benefits commonly associated with development – a national infrastructure for transport, sanitation, education and health – failed to reach to the majority of the population even during periods of relative stability, a reality that was clearly reflected in statistics and human development indicators. Thus, if we use the term modernisation more narrowly in relation to social and economic development, Afghanistan did not compare favourably with its neighbours.

It was, nonetheless, the expansion of the modern state apparatus that led to increased educational opportunities and the creation of female administrative and professional cadres.[19] Although this was a predominantly urban phenomenon, the collapse of the state eroded whatever little institutional support existed for women's public roles and, more generally, depleted the social capital of the country through a process of elite displacement and 'brain drain'. After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Afghanistan became the target of state-building efforts through forms of social engineering that have become increasingly standardised by means of principles collectively endorsed by the international aid community. A commitment to ensuring greater gender equality was folded into these packages and was reiterated in a succession of policy documents jointly endorsed by the government and international donors. I have argued elsewhere (Kandiyoti 2007b) that the gender agenda of donor-instigated reforms and the goals and means pursued by the international actors pushing for gender equality started inhabiting parallel universes with the real world of politics in Afghanistan, further politicising the debates around women's rights.

Conclusion: Which Islam? Whose modernity?

I have attempted to show that, abstracted from the concrete historical and social contexts in which they are embedded and vested with contested meanings, neither Islam nor modernity serves as a viable analytic category for an

understanding of the politics of gender. Shifting appropriations of Islam, feminism and modernity by state and non-state, local and global actors map out complex and fluid configurations that can be fully understood only on their own terms. The cases of Central Asia and Afghanistan provide particularly productive illustrations of the effects of different legacies of state-building (and their 'modern' trajectories) on the political and discursive possibilities of debates on gender and women's rights.

In Central Asia, the movement of Muslim cultural reform that arose in the latter part of the nineteenth century was aborted by Soviet policies of 'cultural revolution'. As modernity and 'enlightenment' were appropriated by communist cadres, elements of both the Muslim clergy and the local intelligentsia that were leaning towards progressive readings of Islam were either sidelined or actively suppressed to forestall the dilution of communist ideology and the emergence of an alternative leadership. Soviet policies had paradoxical effects. On the one hand, a command economy integrating the Central Asian republics into the Soviet Union as predominantly rural, primary commodity producers stalled certain socio-demographic features of modernisation. On the other hand, the Soviet state created an extensive infrastructure for the spread of universal literacy, basic health care, social welfare and the support of women's maternal and public roles. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, successor regimes presided over the demise of the Soviet social contract and the retreat of the state from the provision of public goods and social welfare. The creed of socialist modernity was renounced in favour of the retrieval of 'national' traditions. Severe crises of redistribution and legitimacy were papered over with nationalist rhetoric and an appeal to national heritage that, in the early days of independence, made explicit references to Islam. However, as Islam became politicised in the highly charged geo-political context of the 'war on terror', governments endeavoured to draw the line between 'national' expressions of religion and transnational radical Islam, now seen as a destabilising force. The mantle of 'modernity from above' was appropriated by institutions of international governance promoting an agenda of market transition and democratisation and their own blueprints of gender equality. However, local civil-society platforms for the articulation of women's rights remain marginal, and the politics of gender is likely to be fought out on an ideological terrain monopolised by authoritarian governments and their Islamist opponents.

In Afghanistan, attempts at modernisation were initiated by an urban state elite whose control over the rural and tribal periphery remained precarious. A weak rentier state failed to bring the benefits commonly associated with modernisation – a national infrastructure for transport, sanitation, education and health – to the majority of its population. Human development indicators such as life expectancy, literacy and health status remained generally adverse, and particularly so in the case of women. The state provided weak institutional support for women's public roles at the best of times, a support that disappeared

altogether as Afghanistan descended into civil war. Historically, Islam had a central role to play as an ideology of modern state-building in Afghanistan. However, in comparison to the pre-war years, the ideological field was rendered more homogenous by the years of jihad and the backing received by different Islamist factions during the cold war fought by proxy on Afghan soil. Although the day-to-day workings of patriarchal relations in Afghanistan are primarily a reflection of the kinship practices of diverse ethnic communities, calls for reform in areas affecting the family and women's rights are readily stalled with reference to Islam, even when they target customary norms that have little grounding in Islamic law. The discursive field around women's rights is severely restricted by the technocratic agendas of donor-led state-building, with its blueprints for democratic participation and women's rights, on the one hand, and internal political constituencies that claim to speak in the name of Islam, on the other. These interactions contribute to defensive forms of self-consciousness among both foreign and local participants in these debates, where some opt to essentialise Afghan cultural practices as immutable 'tradition', while others apply missionary zeal to their transformation. What unites cultural relativists with radical modernisers, however, is the perception that gender relations constitute an appropriate arena for struggle over the direction of the Afghan polity.

Debating the compatibility (or incompatibility) of Islam, feminism and modernity sets up false dilemmas to the extent that these terms remain devoid of utility outside an understanding of the concrete social relations that lend them substance and meaning. More productive questions – and answers – could be sought in an understanding of how different appropriations of Islam and modernity by different political actors, both local and global, shape and circumscribe the discursive possibilities of the politics of gender.

Summary of chapter

This chapter compares the trajectories of state-led modernisation, contestations in the realm of gender, and the role of Islam in these processes in three regional contexts with strongly contrasting experiences. Much of the literature on Islam and gender concerns the Middle East, where modernisation was typically promoted by nationalist elites who considered women's emancipation both a symbol of progress and a means to achieve national development. Against this backdrop, the chapter discusses developments in Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asia and in Afghanistan. Soviet Central Asia experienced modernisation without the market, led by socialist elites that made efforts to break down traditional social structures and to mobilise women. Afghanistan too had its modernising elites, but they faced several conundrums: unresolved tensions between state-building and nation-building, the central place of Islam with regard to the legitimacy of rule and the limited capacity of the central state to extract resources, deliver benefits, and enforce law and order.

These different contexts gave rise to very different politics of gender. In all three regions, developments since the early 1980s have led to a new salience of Islam in public life and in the politics of gender, although the dynamic was a very different

one in each region. Neo-liberal economic reforms dramatically weakened the role of the state as a provider of welfare in many Middle Eastern countries, and saw the emergence of various Islamic associations taking over social and economic roles previously played by the state. The Iranian Revolution and the jihad against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan were powerful catalysts of political movements throughout the regions. After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the new regimes of Central Asian states had recourse to ethno-national 'traditions' as tools in nation-building and adopted an ambivalent attitude towards Islam, endorsing some of its local expressions and severely suppressing its political manifestations. The combination of a loss of women's entitlements and benefits from the state (the essence of the paternalist Soviet social contract) and the emergence of 'official' national ideologies endorsing male privilege led to an invitation to women to return to 'traditional' roles, blurring the boundaries between secular and Islamic sources of morality. In post-Taliban Afghanistan, the reach of the state continues to be limited, in the absence of a sustainable political settlement. The constituencies pressing for an expansion of women's rights – with the prompting of the international donor community – have an extremely weak hand to play in an ideological field rendered homogenous by the years of jihad.

Questions

1. What are the main strands of debate on Islam, gender and women's rights? Compare and contrast approaches that privilege Islamic history and textual sources (and justifications for resorting to these) with other critical perspectives of a sociological orientation.
2. Various strands of scholarship have developed critiques of the authoritarian modernisation of Muslim societies and its (allegedly positive) impact on women's rights and gender relations. What are the main arguments put forward by these intellectual trends?
3. What was meant by the claim that Central Asian women were made to play the role of a 'surrogate proletariat'? On what grounds was this claim contested by other scholars?
4. Explain the processes through which Soviet modernisation efforts could paradoxically lead to a strengthening or revival of 'traditional' social structures and practices.
5. Is the common observation correct that the collapse of the Soviet Union caused a return to more conservative ('traditional') gender ideologies and practices? Was this due to a revival of Islam, or were other factors involved?
6. Why were modernising reforms less successful in Afghanistan than in neighbouring Central Asian states?
7. In both the Central Asian and Afghan contexts, the place of Islam in politics was powerfully conditioned by the interventions of external actors. What consequences did these have for women's rights?
8. If the modernisation process is seen as a struggle between different elites, how would you define the relevant elites in the three regions discussed? And how would you explain the resurgence of Islam in these different regions?
9. What have been women's gains and losses in these regions since the middle of the twentieth century?

Notes

1. For an excellent discussion of Egypt, see Cole (1981); for an account of the Ottoman/Turkish debates, see Kandiyoti (1991b).
2. The extent to which contemporary debates on women's modesty are reliant upon these dualities is illustrated by Hoffman-Ladd (1987). See also Kandiyoti (1993). Themes of cultural invasion still remain central to Islamist constructions of female modesty.
3. Some illustrations of these influences may be found in Jayawardena (1986), Chatterjee (1990), Kandiyoti (1991a), Baron (1994, 2007), Badran (1995), and Paidar (1995).
4. On state-sponsored religious conservatism in Egypt, see Ismail (1998). The intense competition in the 1990s between various contenders, including government agencies and the official ulama, is also discussed in Bayat (1998). In Turkey, ironically – given its posture as the purported guarantor of state secularism – it was the military who, with the support of the Özal government in the 1980s, encouraged the building of mosques and the expansion of religious education.
5. Some examples of the latter genre may be found in al-Hibri (1982), Mernissi (1991), Ahmed (1992), Hassan (1996), Wadud (1999), Ezzat (2001) and Barlas (2002).
6. Moghadam (2002b) presents an overview of the debates. Major contributions include Paidar (1995), Afshar (1998), Najmabadi (1998), Mir-Hosseini (1999) and Moghissi (1999).
7. The 2005 Arab Human Development Report (UNDP 2006) analyses some of these deficits by situating them in the context of complex global and local influences without implicating Islam. Authors who attempt to put Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' thesis to empirical test using various aggregate data sets, on the other hand, argue that, if there is a cultural fault line between the Muslim world and the West, it lies not in the realm of democratic ideals but in the areas of gender and sexuality (Donno and Russett 2004).
8. Turkey and the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union constitute exceptions with the full secularisation of their legal codes, while Tunisia also stands out with one of the most liberal codes in the Arab world.
9. This encounter demarcated different categories of colonial subjects. The Tatars, who had been part of the Russian empire since the sixteenth century, were more thoroughly integrated into its administrative structures. They fulfilled a special role, as the tsars spread their rule into extensive Muslim areas in the mid-nineteenth century. The Kazakh Hordes of the northern tier came under Russian domination in the second quarter of the eighteenth century and were subject to openly interventionist colonial policies, including missionary activity and a massive influx of Slav settlers. The southern tier, conquered in the latter half of the nineteenth century, experienced more accommodationist policies, with tsarist officialdom working within the framework of Islamic institutions and according the Khanates of Bukhara and Khiva nominal independence under a Protectorate status.
10. In practice, the record was replete with instances of evasion of new rules by means of supplying false witnesses on the age of marriage partners, presenting false grooms and brides, or substituting a child-bride with an older sister. Criminal

prosecution for *qalin* cases evidently took place mainly when the parties failed to honour their promises, so that, ironically, Soviet courts were used to enforce the proper practice of *qalin*. See Northrop (2001a).

11. It is quite significant that in a survey carried out in Tashkent in 2001 less than 2% of respondents mentioned that the institution of polygamy is justified by the laws of Islam. Most identified polygamy as the prerogative of new wealth, although the majority disapproved of its effects on the health of the family unit. See Pogrebov (2006).
12. Most ethnographic accounts of gender relations are based on pre-war research or refugee contexts. Some of the main sources are Nancy Tapper (1991), Grima (1992) and Shalinsky (1994). There is, currently, a significant dearth of scholarly work on changing social relations except in relation to strategic topics such as the production and trade of narcotics and the dynamics of armed insurgency.
13. Barakat and Wardell (2002), for instance, refer to these dualities to develop their argument, while Dupree (1998a) draws our attention to the role of an insulated Westernised elite that was effectively cut off from the rural majority. Moghadam (1993: 248), whilst acknowledging the characteristics of Afghanistan as a 'weak' state ruling over a patriarchal, tribal society, also invokes 'the very real conflicts between modernisers and traditionalists and between women's emancipation and patriarchy'.
14. Afghanistan became a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), signed without reservations in March 2003 under circumstances that are still unclear. Signatory governments are normally bound to produce progress reports. As of 2008, no such report had been forthcoming.
15. This was the case in the 1924 and 1929 rebellions and again, but without the same success, in 1959, when Daoud introduced legislation lifting the compulsory wearing of the veil and turned on the ulama for opposing him.
16. The fact that foreign aid to the resistance was distributed through the Pakistani government, which singled out seven Sunni Islamist parties as 'official' recipients of assistance, had a decisive impact on the shape of the political field. It is worth noting that these parties had little influence inside Afghanistan before the Soviet invasion. See Hyman ([1984] 1992).
17. The parliament – where women benefit from a quota of 25% reserved seats – has been the scene of tense face-offs between women MPs and male members of *mujahidin* parties.
18. Domestically generated revenue as a percentage of GNP was a mere 6%, even in the period of stability that preceded the fall of the monarchy (Rubin 1995: 63–4). In 1972, the two greatest resources that formed the backbone of the economy – agriculture and livestock – yielded a mere 1% of state revenue. See Hyman ([1984]1992: 32).
19. These reached their apex under the PDPA, when women were hired in unprecedented numbers, especially during the war years. In the state apparatus as a whole by the summer of 1988 women accounted for 18.6% of the staff, with the highest proportion in the Ministry of Education, where they formed 43% of personnel. Overall in 1986, 270,000 women held jobs compared to only 5,000 in 1978, and there were 5,000 women among the police and militia. See Giustozzi (2000).

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CHAPTER 5

Sufism, 'Popular' Islam and the Encounter with Modernity

Martin van Bruinessen

Muslim reformers and Sufism

The various reform movements that have swept across the Muslim world since the late eighteenth century have had ambivalent attitudes towards Sufism, if they were not downright hostile to it. Most radical in their rejection of Sufi practices and beliefs were the original Wahhabi movement and India's Ahl-i Hadith movement, as well as later Salafi movements that derived from the same puritanical inspiration.[1] After the first Wahhabi conquest of Mecca and Medina, in 1803, all tombs in and around the cities were destroyed and practising Sufis were persecuted. (The Wahhabis did not target only Sufis, though; the rich Shiʿi shrines in southern Iraq were looted and then also destroyed.) Less radical Islamic reformers, such as the Indian Deoband movement, the Egyptian reformists around Muhammad ʿAbduh and Indonesia's Muhammadiyah also strongly opposed at least certain Sufi practices and were very critical of Sufism in its organised form, the Sufi orders (*tariqa*, pl. *turuq*). Secular-minded nationalist reformers, most notably Turkey's Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and his circle, considered the Sufi orders as impediments to progress that kept the masses imprisoned in a state of ignorance and superstition. Turkey was the only Muslim country to ban all orders and close the tombs and shrines that were objects of popular veneration, but most other states have also attempted to bring the orders under some degree of control and curtail 'excesses'.

The Sufi practices that reformers objected to have differed from place to place and from one historical context to another – Sufi orders have usually been favourably inclined to the adoption of local cultural forms – but a few stand out in most debates. These include visits to the tombs of saints, especially when their purpose is to demand intercession or help; the use of music, dance or drugs to produce a state of ecstasy or changed awareness; the invocation of spirits of saints living or dead through the recitation of special prayers and litanies; the attribution of miraculous powers to Sufi shaykhs and the traffic in magical objects such as amulets; and the unconditional surrender of the individual devotee to a Sufi master. These practices were condemned as *bidʿa dalala*, reprehensible innovations alien to pristine Islam, and explained as borrowings from other religious traditions or as corrupt deformations of authentic Islamic practices.

Western observers and the reform of Sufi practices

Western observers with some degree of knowledge of classical Sufi literature concurred with the reformers that Sufism was dramatically in decline and that many practices that went by its name were decadent survivals that appealed mainly to the uneducated and were due to disappear once modern education had been spread. In his famous work on life in Egypt in the 1830s, Edward Lane ([1836] 1860: ch. X) discussed the rituals of the various Sufi orders in a chapter on 'superstitions'. Several orders had rituals in which their members handled poisonous snakes, pierced themselves with knives and skewers or engaged in other forms of violence against the self in order to show their invulnerability. The most spectacular public performance, which Lane (ibid.: 451–3, 468–70) described at length, was the *doseh* (*dawsa*), at which the shaykh of the Saʿdiyya order rode on horseback over hundreds of his prostrate disciples, who claimed they suffered no harm because of the powerful prayers they recited. Under European diplomatic pressure, and applauded by Muslim reformists including ʿAbduh, the khedive Tawfiq prohibited the *doseh* in 1881, and it has not been performed in Egypt since (De Jong 1978: 94–6). Interestingly, Lane relates that more than a half century earlier the shaykh himself had already wanted to discontinue the practice but had had to yield to pressure from his followers, who wished to maintain it.

The Dutch scholar Snouck Hurgronje (1931: 176–9), who spent five months in Mecca in 1885 observing the 'Jawah' community there (residents and pilgrims from South East Asia), gives an amusing account of a conflict between two shaykhs of the Naqshbandi order, Sulayman Zuhdi and Khalil Pasha, who competed for the clientele of simple Malay and Turkish pilgrims. For many of these pilgrims, a written *ijaza* or proof of initiation, issued in Mecca, was a desirable asset to take home, and both shaykhs issued such documents on a large scale. Like flocks of sheep ready to be shorn – as Snouck Hurgronje notes, emphasising that this was also an economic enterprise – groups of unsophisticated pilgrims were induced into their *zawiya* (Sufi lodge) and given a brief training in the prayers and techniques of the order, after which they were sent home with the desired *ijaza* without having learnt anything significant. Neither shaykh cared whether his disciples had basic knowledge of the teachings of scriptural Islam – or so at least their detractors claimed. In their fight over these 'flocks of sheep', the shaykhs wrote pamphlets accusing one another of teaching unacceptable practices, and one of them had the local authorities intervene on his behalf. Snouck Hurgronje did not hide his scorn for these popular Sufi teachers, probably echoing the opinion of ulama with whom he spoke. By contrast, he expressed much respect for another Naqshbandi teacher in Mecca, the learned Muhammad Salih al-Zawawi, who did not cater to the vulgar masses but taught a sober variety of mysticism to a select number of students who were already well advanced in Islamic learning.

More significantly, Snouck Hurgronje observed that, contrary to what earlier Western observers had claimed, the ulama and the Sufis did not represent incompatible religious traditions in rivalry with one another. Several of the most learned ulama of Mecca were themselves practising Sufis, and few if any were opposed to Sufism and the Sufi orders as such, even if they criticised certain specific practices. He even perceived that the changing political circumstances – rapid expansion of Western influence and dramatic decline of the political power of Muslim polities – were causing an increasingly positive appreciation of the Sufi orders among the ulama. Whereas political leaders were reluctant to come to the defence of Islam, it was the shaykhs of popular Sufi orders who showed themselves capable of mobilising 'fanatical' masses for that purpose (Snouck Hurgronje 1931: 203–5). Snouck Hurgronje's interest in the orders concerned specifically their anti-colonial potential. In the following decades, he was himself to become perhaps the most prominent representative of scholarship in the service of colonial interests and the most sophisticated contributor to what has been termed the 'littérature de surveillance', the security-oriented study of Muslim societies.[2]

What is a Sufi order?

In the paragraphs above, two controversial aspects of Sufi orders were mentioned: quaint devotional practices and a potential for social mobilisation, possibly of an anti-colonial nature. It is time for a more systematic discussion. There are a number of ways of defining what a Sufi order is. Each order is, in principle, a distinctive spiritual discipline (the term *tariqa* literally means 'path'), and has its own repertoire of *dhikr*, prayers, litanies and spiritual techniques, which may to some extent overlap with those of other orders. The *dhikr* (literally remembrance) or chanting of God's names and other short formulas may be silent or loud, combined with specific breathing techniques, bodily movements and meditation exercises; it may or may not be deliberately trance-inducing and produce insensitivity to pain. Other spiritual exercises include various forms of contemplation and listening to music and poetry.

Most orders are named after a founding saint, and the distinctive prayers and techniques are commonly believed to have been handed down from the founder of the order along a chain of successors to the current teacher. Each member of an order is thus connected by a chain of teachers (*silsila* or spiritual genealogy) to the founder of the order and from him onward up to the Prophet Muhammad. Different Sufi orders, in this view, represent different aspects of Muhammad's spiritual teachings, and the names of the saints in a particular *silsila* give an indication of the type of spirituality the order stands for. The *silsila* is not only important in that it legitimates and guarantees the authenticity of the *tariqa*'s spiritual discipline; it also stands for an ongoing possibility of spiritual communication.

There is a widespread belief that a Sufi master's power of guidance continues even after his death, and that the Sufi is thus connected through a chain of living teacher spirits to the Prophet and ultimately to God.

One can in principle follow a *tariqa* individually, after having been instructed and initiated by a shaykh of the order, but more commonly the *tariqa* is also a particular type of association, with a hierarchical structure and a loyal membership and a following that give it a considerable continuity over time. It is especially this aspect that made Sufi orders appear politically significant to colonial administrators and scholars, and, though other types of association have to some extent replaced the orders, it continues to make them significant actors in many societies. A *tariqa* shaykh may appoint a number of deputies (*khalifa*), often in strategically chosen localities, and one or more of them may ultimately succeed to his position. (In some contexts, the succession may be from father to son but that is not the norm.) Through these *khalifa* and *khalifa* of *khalifa*, a shaykh may be at the centre of an extensive network of followers and disciples. There is a core of disciples (*murid*) who have pledged their loyalty to the shaykh (initiation into the *tariqa* takes the form of a *bay'a* or pledge of allegiance to the master) and regularly carry out the devotions of the order under the shaykh's or a *khalifa*'s direction. Besides these disciples in the strict sense, there may be a much larger number of followers who are affiliated with the shaykh in a more diffuse sense and who look upon him as a patron and intercessor. Membership in a Sufi order is in principle voluntary and open to people of all classes and ethnic backgrounds – although there have been many cases where entire families, village communities or urban craftsmen were for many generations affiliated with the same *tariqa* without much room for individual choice, and there is often a noticeable distinction among members on the basis not only of spiritual achievement but of social status as well. Yet, in many societies, the *turuq* were until recently the institutions that came closest to constituting a civil society, and they provide modern urbanites with one of the few environments of trust beyond the family. The degree of institutionalisation of the orders varies widely; some are highly informal associations, with gatherings in private homes; others have permanent lodges (*zawiya*, *khanaqah*, *tekke*) for retreats and the congregational devotions which also function as free hostels for disciples from elsewhere, and a permanent staff.[3] In the twentieth century, several orders adopted the trappings of a modern organisation, with explicit rules and regulations for membership and bureaucratic offices.

The nineteenth-century resurgence of Sufi orders

The debate on the roots of modernity in the Muslim world – was it due solely to the impact of the West or also to indigenous developments? – has not yielded an unambiguous conclusion. Sufi orders, as Snouck Hurgronje observed, appear

to have experienced a significant increase in membership in the nineteenth century, and also gained a new legitimacy, in response to the encroachments of colonial powers. However, in various places the Sufi resurgence began in fact as early as the late eighteenth century and preceded actual colonial conquest (as did the emergence of Wahhabism). Some scholars have perceived in these movements indications that Muslim societies were already experiencing an indigenous process of modernisation, with developments analogous to Enlightenment, prior to the age of colonialism. Some critics of this view denied that these movements exemplified distinctly modern sensibilities and claimed that the allegedly new ideas in the Sufi authors of this period could already be found in the earliest Sufi literature.[4]

In West Africa, a wave of great jihad movements, typically led by Sufi teachers, ushered in more modern patterns of state formation and constitutes a historical watershed. The first of these jihads was, however, fought not against Western invaders but against older local elites, who were partly Islamicised but held on to many pagan practices. Some later observers (e.g. Hiskett 1976) attribute the impulse behind these movements to a revitalisation of Sufism in Egypt, which itself was a reaction against the rise of Wahhabism in the Arabian Peninsula; others have suggested that the first impact of the West on the political economy of the region had made itself felt even before direct physical contact was established. Either way, these movements signalled significant changes in the societies concerned. Although in some cases old established Sufi orders were involved (notably the Qadiriyya, which was widespread in the region), the greatest vigour was displayed by orders that had only recently emerged, especially the Tijaniyya.

The most important of these jihad movements was led by Shaykh Usuman dan Fodio around the turn of the century and resulted in the creation of an Islamic state, the Sokoto caliphate, in northern Nigeria. Dan Fodio was a Sufi of the Qadiriyya order as well as a learned scholar, who saw himself as a *mujaddid*, one of the periodically appearing 'renewers' whose task it is to purify and reinvigorate Islamic belief and practice. His jihad was directed against the pagan practices and beliefs that were still dominant in the nominally Muslim Hausa chiefdoms of the region, and aimed at the stricter application of *shari'a* prescriptions in dress code, ritual practice, trade law and personal law. The traditional chiefdoms were abolished and replaced by a more centralised and explicitly Islamic polity, headed by a *khalifa* (caliph) to whom a number of *amir*s, rulers of smaller units, owed allegiance (Hiskett 1976; Martin 1976). The exact role of the Qadiriyya in this jihad is a matter of debate; the state he founded did not replicate the structure of the Sufi order, but Usuman dan Fodio's position as the highest shaykh of this order no doubt facilitated the mobilisation of followers.

Al-Hajj Umar Tall or 'Umar al-Futi was a Senegalese scholar and Sufi who launched a major jihad in the mid-nineteenth century. As his title indicates,

Umar had made the pilgrimage to Mecca; during his stay there he was initiated into the Tijaniyya, and after years of training received an *ijaza* or licence to teach the *tariqa* in his homeland. He is the author of one of the most important Tijaniyya texts. On the return journey he spent time in Sokoto, took part in its wars and married the *khalifa*'s daughter. Converting people to the Tijaniyya wherever he went, he returned to his native region, where he first preached against animism and *bid'a* and then took up arms, first against pagans and later, defensively, against Muslim chiefs, who saw him as a dangerous rival. The core of his forces consisted of *talaba*, disciples of the Tijaniyya; in this case it was clearly the *tariqa* that structured the military power of his movement. His rapidly increasing power also brought him into conflict with the French in Senegal, although he never directly targeted them and apparently even sought some form of accommodation with them. Perceiving this movement as a threat, the French attacked and defeated Umar's forces, but could not prevent his establishing a large Muslim state further east. In the following decades, there were various other confrontations between Tijaniyya shaykhs and French colonial power, though it would probably be wrong to attribute a strong anti-colonial attitude to the order (Hiskett 1976; Martin 1976; Triaud and Robinson 2000).

At the other end of the Muslim world, in South East Asia, Dutch colonial expansion encountered activist Sufi orders playing a part in local resistance. It was especially the Sammaniyya and later the Qadiriyya wa-Naqshbandiyya that were repeatedly found to be involved in uprisings against traditional indigenous authorities and occasionally the Dutch. These were the first orders to find an organised mass following in South East Asia; before their arrival, the spiritual exercises of other orders appear to have been practised mostly individually or in small elite groups, gradually merging into folk belief and magic (Bruinessen 1994). The Sammaniyya was a new order, initiated by the Medinan teacher Muhammad Samman (d. 1775) by combining the Khalwatiyya with elements from other orders and adding new, loud and ecstatic recitations. Within decades, the order found a rapidly increasing following in various parts of the Indonesian archipelago, introduced by local men who had studied with the master himself or his first successor in Medina. When the Dutch attempted to occupy the city of Palembang in South Sumatra in 1819, they were fought by men dressed in white, who worked themselves into a frenzy with the loud Sammaniyya *dhikr* and fearlessly attacked them. In the 1860s they met similar resistance in South Borneo. The largest uprising of the nineteenth century took place in Banten in 1888; here it was the Qadiriyya wa-Naqshbandiyya, a similar composite order, that was involved (Bruinessen 1994).

The Sammaniyya combined a number of seemingly contradictory traits: it was a 'popular' order in the sense both of having a mass following and of endorsing loud and ecstatic rituals, but it also stressed strict compliance with the *shari'a*.

Its teachers espoused the metaphysical doctrines of the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*) that were considered heterodox by many other ulama, and a concept of sainthood that envisaged the spirit of Shaykh Samman capable of coming to his followers' assistance. Devotees were convinced that the loud recitations made them invulnerable because of the saint's intercession. (The same was true of the Qadiriyya wa-Naqshbandiyya, whose patron saint ʿAbd al-Qadir Jilani had an even greater reputation as a supernatural protector.) This was no doubt one factor that gave these orders a role in uprisings; another factor was the form of organisation of the orders that facilitated the coordination of action. Nonetheless, anti-colonial activism cannot be the sole reason of these orders' rapid dissemination: they were already well established when the first confrontations took place. They appear to be part of a broader movement of revitalisation of religious attitudes in this period.

In a rightly famous study, the anthropologist Evans-Pritchard (1949) showed how the Sanusiyya order provided the segmentary Bedouin tribes of Cyrenaica with an integrating structure that made collective action possible. The Sanusiyya was another new order, named after its founder, the Algerian scholar Muhammad b. ʿAli al-Sanusi (d. 1859), who combined the reputation of wandering holy man with a puritan reformist attitude. After a long stay in Mecca, he finally settled in Cyrenaica and built a lodge near the intersection of the major east–west and north–south routes. Secondary Sufi lodges (*zawiya*), often strategically located at the boundary of two tribal territories, were connected to the central lodge in a hierarchical structure. Not being part of the tribal structure themselves and enjoying religious prestige among the tribes, the Sanusi lodges could mediate in tribal conflicts and coordinate joint action. The Sanusi resistance against the Italian occupation (1911–43) became the most successful case of anti-colonial *tariqa* activity. Libya finally attained independence as a kingdom, with the incumbent head of the Sanusiyya, Shaykh Idris, as the king.

Two other segmentary tribal societies in which a Sufi order succeeded in politically uniting tribal groups were those of the northern Caucasus and Kurdistan. The resistance of the Muslim peoples of Daghestan and Chechnya to Russian southward expansion had begun in the eighteenth century and reached its zenith in the mid-nineteenth, under three imams (politico-military leaders) with strong Naqshbandi connections,[5] who led a jihad and for decades established *shariʿa* rule in the region until the ultimate defeat of the third imam, Shamil, in 1859 (Gammer 1994; Kemper 2005). Among the Kurds of the Ottoman Empire and its successor states, several Sufi shaykhs became themselves the political and military leaders of a series of uprisings, between 1880 and 1925, that heralded the emergence of Kurdish nationalism. In both regions, this concerned the same order, a dynamic branch of the Naqshbandiyya that came to be named Khalidiyya after its founder, the Kurdish shaykh Mawlana Khalid al-Shahrazuri (d. 1827).

The charismatic and zealous Mawlana Khalid had introduced some changes in ritual that strengthened the bond between disciple and master even further, and he appointed a large number of deputies (*khalifa*) to various districts of Kurdistan as well as other parts of the Ottoman Empire, including Mecca. Most of these *khalifa* in turn appointed their own deputies, resulting in a dense, centralised network, held together by strong master–disciple ties. Several older branches of the Naqshbandiyya as well as the Qadiriyya reoriented themselves towards Shaykh Khalid and were also integrated into the network (Abu-Manneh 1982; Bruinessen 1992). The Khalidiyya distinguished itself by a strong emphasis on Sunni orthodoxy, a hostile attitude towards Shi'ism, concern about increasing European influence and an inclination to political activism – which in times of insecurity no doubt added to its success. Ottoman administrative reforms, perceived to be due to European pressure, were upsetting Kurdish society, resulting in an increase of tribal conflicts, which gave some of the Khalidiyya shaykhs the occasion to act as mediators and peace-brokers (and thereby to gain considerable worldly influence). Under their leadership, narrow tribal loyalties were overcome and the beginnings of a Kurdish national awareness emerged.

The controversy about Neo-Sufism

The militant movements described in the preceding section, in which Sufi orders appeared to be playing a central role, suggest that a number of significant changes were taking place more or less simultaneously all over the Muslim world. Several prominent scholars, including Fazlur Rahman and John O. Voll, noted a number of other new developments in Sufism besides the increased militancy, and coined the term 'Neo-Sufism', defined loosely as 'Sufism reformed on orthodox lines and interpreted in an activist sense'.[6] This phenomenon was most typically observed in the new orders that emerged in North Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Tijaniyya and the orders deriving from Ahmad b. Idris (Sanusiyya, Ahmadiyya, Idrisiyya, Khatmiyya, Rashidiyya). These orders differed from the 'classical' Sufi orders in that their founders did not trace their spiritual genealogies through long lines of predecessors but claimed to have a direct spiritual relationship with the Prophet.[7] Fazlur Rahman (1979: 206), followed by many later authors, perceived that these Neo-Sufi orders 'rejected the idea of a union with God and postulated instead a union with the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad' – presumably part of the reform on orthodox lines. Voll (1982: 36–9 and *passim*) claimed that Neo-Sufis reformulated Ibn 'Arabi's ideas in less pantheistic terms, with greater emphasis on God's transcendence, and he observed that many of them held a strong interest in hadith studies in common with puritan reformers such as the Wahhabis.

The concept of 'Neo-Sufism' was subjected to scathing criticism in an

article by O'Fahey and Radtke (1993), which gave rise to an extended series of exchanges.[8] The critics claimed that many of the allegedly new ideas in 'Neo-Sufism' could already be found in the earliest Sufi authors, and that certain alleged aspects of 'Neo-Sufism' (such as the shift from efforts to achieve unity with God to imitation of the Prophet) appeared to exist mostly in the imagination of observers. The label of 'Neo-Sufism' was, moreover, applied to a wide range of Sufis and Sufi movements that had little in common with one another, and the various traits attributed to it did not usually appear in combination. The anti-colonial militancy attributed to the 'Neo-Sufi' orders owed much to selective perception by colonial administrators and unwarranted generalisation from a few cases. In fact, in most places and times the Tijaniyya cooperated cordially with the French authorities rather than opposing them, and *mutatis mutandis* the same applied for some of the other 'Neo-Sufi' orders elsewhere. Knysh (2002) argues along similar lines that the militancy attributed to the Naqshbandiyya in the Caucasus was due to misrepresentation by Russian administrators; the order certainly was a factor in the resistance but neither its driving force nor its major organising structure.

The debate on Neo-Sufism has been useful in breaking through facile generalisations and the uncritical repetition of unproven assumptions; but even the strongest critics of the concept admit that there is something very specific especially to the new North African orders. The debate has also drawn attention to the complex relationship between Sufism and puritan reformism and has shown that these are not so incompatible as had long been assumed. Recent research has brought to light various forms of accommodation between Salafism and Sufism (Weismann 2000, 2005; Villalón 2007). It does not appear very helpful to lump them all together under the label of 'Neo-Sufism' (as some authors do), but it is important to notice that there are Sufis with Salafi attitudes as well as Salafis with a strong Sufi bend.

Quite a few leading reformists appeared not only to have a family background with strong Sufi connections or a personal prior experience with a Sufi order, but to have been inspired by certain Sufi ideas without perceiving this to be in conflict with their Salafi reformist convictions. Several decades ago, George Makdisi (1974) provocatively claimed he could prove that even Ibn Taymiyya, the authoritative reference for all Salafi currents, was 'a Sufi of the Qadiriyya order'. Other scholars firmly reject Makdisi's interpretation (e.g. Meier 1999: 317–18), but it is clear that Ibn Taymiyya was not the Sufi-basher for whom he has sometimes been taken and that he in fact showed many Sufis respect. Of course Makdisi did not mean that Ibn Taymiyya condoned the 'popular' practices for which the Qadiriyya is known. But in his works he does speak with respect of various Sufis of preceding centuries, many of whom were affiliated with this order, and modern Sufi apologists claim to find in Ibn Taymiyya's works support for certain Sufi practices.[9]

Weismann's work (2000) on reform in nineteenth-century Syria has drawn attention to the considerable overlap between Sufi and Salafi currents there, and he has more recently followed this up with a study of the influence of Sufi ideas in the thought of influential thinkers and activists of the Muslim Brotherhood (Weismann 2005, 2007). On closer inspection, many reformist critics of Sufism appear to be opposed not to Sufism as such, and in many cases not even to the Sufi orders, but to what they consider as decadent teachers who have corrupted the practices of the orders (Bruinessen 1999 and several other contributions in De Jong and Radtke (eds) 1999; Sirriyeh 1999).

We tend to associate devotional practices such as *dhikr*, nightly prayers, meditation on death and weeping with Sufism, because many Sufi orders engage in them and consider them as central to their disciplining of the soul. However, many Salafis engage in the same practices and believe these have their origin in the Qur'an and the practice of the Prophet. Anything smacking of mediation, however, is resolutely rejected – although, even in this sphere, the Salafi authorities of Saudi Arabia have had to make concessions and allow visits to the Prophet's grave. Salafis, then, appear capable of accommodating the devotional aspects of Sufism but not the mediational ones. Within Sufism, on the other hand, various new currents have emerged that to some extent incorporate the puritan spirit of Salafism and reject saint worship.

Decline of Sufism in the twentieth century?

While there still is a consensus among scholars that the Sufi orders were in the ascendancy during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by the middle of the twentieth century scholarly observers gave a more negative verdict on the present state of Sufism. In his authoritative overview of the subject, A. J. Arberry deplored that there were no contemporary Sufis comparable to the great names of the classical period. The last author of a Sufi compendium worth mentioning, Muhammad Amin al-Kurdi, had died in 1914.[10] In many places, it is true, the Sufi orders continued to attract the 'ignorant masses, but no man of education would care to speak in their favour' (Arberry 1950: 122). And J. Spencer Trimingham (1971: 250) concluded his survey of the history and sociology of Sufi orders with the observation that the orders were everywhere in decline, 'opposed by the ʿulama, by the *salafi*-type of fundamentalist reformers, and by the secularized new men, and primarily undermined by changes taking place in the whole social and religious climate'. The decline came about, he added, 'less by defection, than because the young have not been joining'. When shaykhs die, 'there is no one to succeed; their sons, in their intellectual outlook and dominant interests, no longer belong to their fathers' world'. New types of associations have emerged, either secular in nature or Islamist, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, that have taken over many of the functions of the Sufi orders and

perform them more efficiently. In this latter observation, Trimingham echoes the sociological explanations offered for the (alleged) decline of the orders that will be discussed in the next section.

Theses of the inevitable decline of Sufism in modernising societies had a certain a priori plausibility, at least until the 1970s. However, the developments of the last quarter of the twentieth century called these theses into question – just like the secularisation thesis had to be rejected or drastically reformulated in order to be retainable. The Islamic resurgence has not only brought a wide range of Islamist and neo-fundamentalist movements into the public sphere but also appears to have occasioned a revival of Sufi orders and related devotional movements. From Morocco and Turkey to Indonesia, Sufi orders have become more visibly present and politically significant; in West and East Africa, where their decline had never been considered imminent, they show renewed vigour. Sufi orders have, moreover, found fertile soil in the West, among both Muslim immigrant populations and Western converts (or even unconverted Westerners). In a related development, rural heterodox communities such as Turkey's Alevis have not disappeared because of urbanisation and the twin forces of secularisation and Islamisation, but rather claim recognition as a distinct religious formation besides orthodox Islam.

Sufism and the sociology of Muslim societies

From saint-worship and illuminationism to scripturalism

The view of the inevitable decline of Sufism became especially widespread because of the influential writings of Clifford Geertz and Ernest Gellner. Comparing, in his delicately crafted essay *Islam Observed*, religious change in Indonesia and Morocco, Geertz (1968) examined the shift from the 'classical styles' of Islam, centred around rural miracle-working saints and mystics, to the dry and legalistic 'scripturalism' of urban reformists. His evocation of the Indonesian and Moroccan 'classical religious styles' (which, he claims, remained 'in some general, overall, vaguely persuasive way' the basic religious orientations in their respective countries, although they had lost hegemony) emphasises their non-scriptural character. The mythical Javanese saint chosen to exemplify the Indonesian version, Sunan Kalijaga, was a converted highway robber who gained his perfect knowledge of Islam through years of immobile meditation in a forest – Geertz considers such 'illuminationism' the pervasive orientation of pre-modern Indonesian Islam. The Moroccan exemplar Sidi Lahcen Lyusi was a historical person but also became the object of a *marabout* (saint) cult centred around his grave. Legend makes him a *sayyid*, a descendant of the Prophet, who by his genealogy was himself, in a sense, Islam embodied, and who further perfected himself through decades spent in the presence of other *marabout*, living and dead, absorbing their supernatural power (*baraka*). He stands, in Geertz's

narrative, for saint-worship and the 'genealogical conception of sanctity' as the core of classical Moroccan Islam.

The transition from these mystical–magical religious styles to a religiosity focused exclusively on scripture, as advocated by the most prominent spokesmen for Islam in the twentieth century, is a sea change. Geertz does not seek an explanation in terms of single causes or stages of social evolution, but he does mention colonialism, the dominance of the West and the rise of nationalism as crucial experiences shaping the nature of the shift. In the mid-twentieth century, it was the charismatic nationalist leaders Sukarno and Muhammad V who exemplified the traditional religious ethos of their cultures, illuminationism and genealogical sanctity, respectively. Scripturalism, especially in the form of 'ideologised' Islam, had gained importance as an alternative claim to legitimacy in the encounter with the West as well as with modern (secular) nationalism. (Geertz speaks of a 'scripturalist interlude', suggesting that it will in due time succumb to further secularisation.)

A major criticism of Geertz is that his description of the classical religious styles compounds historical fact with later legend and gives a flawed representation of 'traditional' Islam in both countries, overstating the miraculous and magical and insufficiently recognising the pervasiveness of scriptural learning. Even in Indonesia, where ascetics and miracle-working holy men abounded before the arrival of Islam, scriptural Islam has existed alongside the mystical variants of the faith almost from the beginning, and most of Indonesia's earliest great Sufi authors, venerated as saints in retrospect, were also scholars of Islamic law. Moreover, living saints kept emerging even in circles of traditionalist scholars well into the twentieth century (Bruinessen 2007). Geertz's exemplary *marabout*, Lyusi, was *also* a scholar and the author of learned treatises, some of which are still in print today (Munson 1993). The ecstatic Sufi and the sober scholar who studied and wrote commentaries on learned texts never were the polar opposites they have often been made out to be.

In pointing at scripturalism as a modern phenomenon, distinctly different from the 'classical religious styles' of these two societies and perhaps still contrary to their basic religious orientations but increasingly influential, Geertz nonetheless made an important point. His use of the term is not entirely consistent throughout the essay: sometimes it also appears to include at least some of the traditional ulama, but it refers primarily to those socially and politically involved Muslim reformists who 'ideologised' their religion – that is, those known at the time as Salafis in Morocco and Modernists in Indonesia.[11] These people tended to reject the traditional authority of the ulama, oppose 'popular' religious beliefs and practices and adhere to Islam as an alternative to such secular ideologies as socialism and liberalism. They were typically the products of modern education, and mass education was dramatically to increase the number of people who adopted similar 'puritan' religious attitudes.

A pendulum model of religious change

Some of the same elements return in Ernest Gellner's well-known model of Muslim society and its internal dynamics.[12] Central to this model is a pendulum movement between 'Sufism' and 'scripturalism', the forms of religiosity that Gellner associated with two major social milieus between which a permanent struggle was waged, the tribes of the periphery and the urban civilisation of the political centre. Gellner built this model on foundations laid by two formidable predecessors, the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher David Hume and the fourteenth-century North African thinker Ibn Khaldun. In Hume's work on religion Gellner found, rather than the theory of unilinear evolution for which he is frequently credited, a theory of oscillation or flux and reflux, from polytheism to theism and back, which Hume attributed to the workings of the human mind. Men have, Hume writes, 'a natural tendency to rise from idolatry to theism, and to sink again from theism to idolatry'.[13] The advance towards some form of monotheism is to do with one deity being singled out as more powerful and more worthy of worship than the others and gradually becoming a perfect, omnipotent, transcendental Creator. This supreme deity then has become so awe-inspiring and distant that men, in approaching him, seek the mediation of a class of spiritual intermediaries, demigods or middle beings, who then themselves become objects of veneration. Thus much of the earlier idolatry is restored, after which the process of purging begins again (Gellner 1981: 10). To give this mentalistic theory a stronger sociological basis, Gellner combined it with an adaptation of Ibn Khaldun's theory of the rise and fall of dynasties, taking the same contrast of urban civilisation and tribal periphery as his point of departure.

In Ibn Khaldun's model, the hardy tribesmen living on the periphery, beyond the control of the state and its army, constitute a perpetual threat, eager to conquer the capital city and its riches. The tribes are potentially superior because of their strong social cohesion and solidarity (*'asabiyya*). The ruling dynasty and urban elite may also have tribal origins, but the conditions of urban life and its luxury inevitably weaken their *'asabiyya* and military prowess. In due time, they become so decadent that a tribal raid may defeat their army and conquer the city. The barbarian conquerors become the new rulers and elite, and in turn undergo the same process of civilisation and decadence, while another coalition of tribal groups is biding its time in the periphery. In Gellner's adaptation of this circular schema, Sufism in the form of 'maraboutism' (the veneration of miracle-working holy men or *marabout*) is associated with the unruly tribes of the periphery and the lower strata of urban society, whereas the religious life of the city is characterised by 'scripturalism' based on the scholarly study of written religious texts as the source of moral norms. Gellner did acknowledge that there also exist learned Sufis who cater to the religious needs of the more sophisticated urban 'bourgeoisie', but for the sake of simplicity he

places Sufism squarely in the category of 'Low Islam', the religion of the masses, and in opposition to 'High Islam', the religion of the scholars. Characteristic of his 'Low Islam' or 'Folk Islam' are ecstatic rituals, magical practices and mediation, and the cult of saints constitutes its very core. 'High Islam' allegedly rejects mediation and is focused on scripture and the strict execution of religious obligations. The tribal raids on the city are not led by the saints, however; as Gellner has it, such raids occur when puritan preachers, who represent a radical version of urban Islam and condemn the moral decline of the townspeople, conclude a coalition with the tribes in order to restore moral purity to the city.[14]

Transcendentalism versus immanentism

In a little-known, thought-provoking paper, Robert Bellah (1970) offered a different analysis of the dynamic relationship between Sufism and anti-Sufism, reminiscent of Hume's ideas on the oscillation of theism and polytheism though not of Gellner's adaptation of it. Bellah analysed the emergence of Islam in the seventh century as a movement of radical *secularisation*, because of its rejection of virtually all institutions that had previously been held as sacred: the gods, priesthood and the established political and social order, including the tribe and extended family, and so on. The Islamic revelation asserted the equality of all men before God and rejected all forms of mediation between man and God (apart from the prophets in their role as messengers). In its rejection of mediation, Bellah argued, Islam presaged the Protestant revolution in Christianity: every Muslim was to be his own priest.

Islam was a latecomer among the great monotheistic religions, and it was already carrying in itself the seeds of a later phase of religious evolution. The radical secularisation (understood as disenchantment of the world) that accompanied early Islam, Bellah suggested, was well ahead of its time and clashed with the social realities of the societies that were to become part of the Muslim world. Sacred institutions soon reappeared, and new forms of mediation became institutionalised in response to social demand. This introduced into the history of Islam and of Muslim societies an inherent tension between the societal demand for the re-enchantment of the world (or for retention of its enchanted nature) and the puritan urge to restore the extreme transcendentalism of early Islam. Movements for reform (*islah*) or renewal (*tajdid*) – in Bellah's terms, movements of secularisation, in the sense of rejection of charisma, of mediation and of the sacral character of persons, places and objects – have been inherent in Islam since well before the modern period (see Voll 1983). Bellah mentioned notably the rise of Sufism, from the tenth century onwards, as the victorious return of the sacred and the idea of mediation into the heart of Islam. Sufism and puritan reformism are presented as opposite poles in Islam, alternating with one another as the dominant form of Muslim belief and practice. The central characteristic of what Bellah calls Sufism is the re-enchantment of the world, notably (the belief

in) the existence of charismatic persons capable of mediating between human and God and of performing miracles. Salafi movements attempt to restore the spirit and practice of the time of the Prophet and his immediate followers, the 'pious predecessors' (*al-salaf al-salih*). Saint-worship and miracle-working rank high among the 'deviations' with which Salafis take issue most strongly, and it is tempting to think of Sufism and Salafism as irredeemably opposed. In actual practice, the relationship between Salafism and Sufism is a more complicated one, as indicated above.

As Islam spread to Asia, and later to Africa, monistic varieties of Sufism (in their most sophisticated version the doctrine of the Unity of Being, *wahdat al-wujud*, associated with Ibn ʿArabi) were most compatible with the local conceptions of immanent godhead, and easily merged with older local beliefs and practices. It was, however, not anti-Sufi puritans who carried out the struggle for reform of these beliefs; most of the early reformers were *shariʿa*-oriented Sufis themselves (Azra 2004). A struggle between immanentist and transcendentalist interpretations took place even within *wahdat al-wujud* Sufism. In the Malay-speaking world, the latter was politically victorious by the seventeenth century (al-Attas 1986), although the former remained present as a strong undercurrent throughout South East Asia and repeatedly re-emerged in 'popular' syncretistic movements.

Modernity and the disenchantment of the world

In Gellner's pendulum model, there is one new element that breaks through the circular time of Hume's and Ibn Khaldun's models. The advent of modernity brings irreversible changes – political centralisation, urbanisation, education – that marginalise the tribal periphery and thereby erode the social foundations of popular Sufism. The final swing of the pendulum towards scripturalist rigorism or fundamentalism is definitive this time, and there is no turning back. 'Low Islam' is doomed to fade away, and the dominant mode of expression will be either secularist populism or, more likely, puritan Islamic scripturalism. Gellner's 'scripturalism' is a broader category than Geertz's and refers to the learned tradition of Islam, which existed besides and in opposition to the 'Sufism' of rural miracle-workers and saints. The type of scripturalism that he sees as victorious in modernity, however, is that not of traditional ulama but of the puritan reformists, who look back for inspiration to the earliest period of Islam and reject most of the classical learned tradition. Islam, in Gellner's analysis, is immune to secularisation because this Muslim puritanism constitutes a functional equivalent of secularisation in Christian Europe (Gellner 1992).

Almost every aspect of Gellner's model has been seriously criticised, notably for its essentialism and the extrapolation of Moroccan peculiarities to the entire world of Islam. For our purposes, the most important flaw is the identification of Sufism with the popular cult of saints and ecstatic rituals, and Gellner's failure to recognise that sainthood stands not outside and in opposition to the learned

tradition but (also) squarely within it, and that there exists a large and sophisticated corpus of learned texts dealing with this concept.[15] The doctor and the saint (as Gellner named them in another article) do not necessarily represent competing styles of Islam but have been part of a single complex for most of the time. 'High' and 'Low' Islam, if those concepts have any value, cannot simply be identified with urban versus rural, and Salafi versus Sufi. Opposition to popular saint cults and the loud festivals at shrines has not only come from anti-Sufi scholars but has also been part of an ongoing debate within Sufism.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as we have seen, several new Sufi orders emerged (notably the Tijaniyya and Sanusiyya), which in several respects borrowed from the discourse of puritan reformists and opposed many 'popular' practices. The Tijaniyya expanded significantly at the expense of some of the older orders (in West Africa, the Qadiriyya). This development does seem to make sense in terms of Gellner's model of Muslim society: the disenchantment of the world may take the form of a shift from the older Sufi orders to the new, more puritan ones and from one type of Sufi master, the mediating, miracle-working saint, to another, the teacher and spiritual director.[16] However, the continuing, and apparently even increasing, popularity of saints' day festivals, also in urban settings (Abu Zahra 1997; Schielke 2006), calls into question the assumption that modernisation would bring about their demise.

Sufi orders and the sociology of modernity

Neither Geertz nor Gellner paid special attention to Sufi orders, the organised form of Sufism.[17] A more judicious and better-informed argument concerning the apparent decline of Sufism that does focus on the Sufi orders is that offered by Michael Gilsenan (1967), who in the 1960s studied an Egyptian *urban* Sufi order. His explanation is based on the variety of secularisation theory that focuses not on disenchantment of the world (as do Geertz and Gellner) but on increasing functional differentiation as a core aspect of modernity. The various social, economic and educational functions that the orders had served in the past, Gilsenan argued, are presently better served by the specialised modern institutions of trade unions, political associations, schools and so on. This is an important and a priori convincing argument, which has the obvious corollary that, when such modern institutions fail to offer their services to certain segments of society, there is room for Sufi orders to resume some of their old functions or even to adopt new ones. It also allows for the emergence of an autonomous religious sphere, in which the orders may continue to perform strictly religious functions.[18] The argument implies, in other words, that the Sufi orders will change but not that they will disappear; it even leaves open the possibility that certain orders may increase in importance.

This had in fact occurred in the case of the order on which Gilsenan focused

in his 1973 book, the Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya. Whereas most of the other orders appeared to have experienced a decline, the Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya had not only maintained its membership but had even expanded. Gilsenan attributed this to a form of Weberian rationalisation: the Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya had transformed itself into a formal organisation with an explicit, written system of rules governing the members (and appropriately called Qanun, 'the Laws') and with officers administering them. Gilsenan's explanation was contested by another student of Egyptian Sufi orders, Frederick de Jong (1974), who suggested that the chief factor contributing to this particular order's growth was state patronage, not bureaucratisation. On the one hand, De Jong argued, all orders had been subjected to a degree of formalisation since the promulgation in 1895 of government regulations governing them and placing them under a supreme shaykh; the incumbent supreme shaykh happened to be the head of the Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya. On the other hand, many other orders had in fact also expanded in membership, without having any additional formal structure beyond that established by the government regulations.

Bureaucratisation and formalisation of the orders and state patronage are not mutually exclusive explanations, and both deserve further exploration. Neither may be an independent causal factor, however: bureaucratisation often takes place under government pressure or in search of government patronage, and governments have little reason to provide patronage to Sufi orders if these do not already have significant constituencies that can be mobilised. More recent research in Egypt has shown that participation in Sufi orders and related activities have increased considerably since the 1960s, in ways that cannot easily be attributed to government patronage or better organisation alone. The increase appears to have been especially strong among the lower middle class, but significant numbers of members of the educated middle classes have also taken an interest in the Sufi path as an alternative to political Islam.[19]

But it is undeniable that bureaucratisation and state patronage have been part of the experience of Sufi orders in many parts of the world. Elsewhere I have attempted to show this for the case of Indonesia, where Sufi orders have significantly gained in influence from the 1970s onwards. Enterprising Sufi shaykhs established formal associations of Sufi teachers and followers, which played a part in mobilising votes at times of general elections. Government patronage allowed some shaykhs greatly to expand the number of their followers – but on at least one occasion the reverse happened and followers deserted a shaykh who was perceived to be too close to the government (Bruinessen 2007). In West Africa, most notably perhaps in Senegal and Mali, the orders are so much part and parcel of the texture of political life that their survival has never been in question; patronage of a Sufi shaykh remains an important asset for political contenders, even as the orders themselves are undergoing change because of the increasing influence of puritan reformism (Villalón 2007).

Re-emergence of the orders after their suppression in Turkey and the (former) Soviet Union

The absence of state patronage, or active repression, in Kemalist Turkey and the Soviet Union has definitely weakened the Sufi orders there, virtually wiping them out in the latter and forcing them underground in the former. Political liberalisation, however, has resulted in the remarkable revival of some of the orders in Turkey, in various new forms (Yavuz 1999; Raudvere 2002; Saktanber 2002; Silverstein 2007); and in some of the former Soviet territories the pilgrimage to Sufi shrines re-emerged almost immediately after the break-up of the Union (e.g. Privratsky 2001). Scholars disagree on the extent to which functioning Sufi orders can presently be said to exist in the former Soviet world (with the exception of the Northern Caucasus, where they were never completely suppressed), but Turkey has witnessed a remarkable revival of several Sufi orders.

The Mevlevi order (the famous 'whirling dervishes') was the first to resurface when the government allowed the public performance of its music and dance (*semah*) as an expression of 'Turkish Islamic culture' in the 1950s. To some, this may initially have been little more than folklore and a tourist attraction, but more and more *semah* groups were established and attracted an educated public interested in Sufi spirituality and the poetry of Mevlana (Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi, the patron saint of the order). The growing international interest in Rumi no doubt contributed to the increasing respectability of the Mevleviyye in Turkey.

The most important order of Turkey is no doubt the Naqshbandiyya, of which four or five major branches are active. One of these was closely involved in the rise of the country's Islamic political parties from the 1970s onwards, in the sense that these parties' founders were affiliated with this Naqshbandi branch and frequently consulted with the shaykh. The order could continue functioning despite the formal ban on *tariqa* activity in Turkey because it had adopted new forms of public activity. *Sohbet* (*suhba*), close proximity and communication with the shaykh, which had always been an important element in spiritual guidance, became modernised in the form of seminars and lectures, which were also made available as audio and later video recordings as well as in printed form. The disciplining of daily life was facilitated by the establishment of housing complexes where only families affiliated with the order lived, dormitories for students, and foundations that carried out charitable work as well as successfully engaging in profit-making economic enterprises.[20]

Turkey's most important religious movement, the Nur movement, is not a Sufi order strictly speaking (it has no *silsila*, no *bay'a*, no set of specific prayers and exercises), but its teachings are pervaded with a Sufi ethos. It has, moreover, adopted various forms of disciplining that are reminiscent of those of the orders: regular meetings where the writings of the founder, Said Nursi, are read and

discussed, a system of moral guidance of new or junior members of the movement by their seniors, and *sohbet*. Of the various wings that emerged within the movement in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the one led by Fethullah Gülen was most spectacularly successful, creating a vast media and education empire, with high-quality schools in numerous countries, geared to the creation of a pious and disciplined elite.[21]

Renewed appreciation of Sufism among 'modern' Muslims

Whereas, in the early twentieth century, persons of modern (that is, Western-style) education tended to be sceptical or dismissive of Sufism, associating it primarily with irrational attitudes and superstitious practices, by the end of the century Sufism, though not necessarily the Sufi orders, had found a new appreciation among the educated. This was partly no doubt a response to the Islamic resurgence and the prominence of increasingly militant groups in many societies. Sufism offered a more irenic discourse, which was more tolerant of non-conformism and more conducive to interfaith harmony, and which was embraced by quite significant sections of the modern middle classes as a psychologically rewarding and intellectually more respectable alternative to Islamism. Influential modern thinkers such as Muhammad Iqbal and Abdolkarim Soroush, who both took a highly negative view of 'popular' Sufism and the blind obedience to Sufi shaykhs that is demanded of their followers in many orders, were at the same time strongly, and consciously, influenced by the metaphysical Sufism of such classical authors as Mawlana Rumi and Ibn ʿArabi. In part because of them, classical Sufi authors regained respectability among the Muslim intellectual elite.[22]

Another factor that should not be discounted is the prestige Sufism and Sufi literature have gained in the West. The revulsion felt by reform-minded intellectuals at the loud and ecstatic rituals of some of the 'popular' Sufi orders had been exacerbated by their awareness of Westerners watching these rituals as exotic expressions of a backward religiosity.[23] But, conversely, the interest that Rumi, Ibn ʿArabi and other great Sufis have engendered among cultivated Westerners, and the latter's positive appreciation of Sufi music, dance and *dhikr* as techniques for raising awareness, have helped to make Sufism more intellectually respectable among educated Muslims (Hermansen 1997; Haenni and Voix 2007).

Transnational Sufism

One of the most remarkable recent developments is the flourishing of Sufism and the Sufi orders in the West. One useful social function of Sufi orders, already in pre-modern times, was that they could provide support to travellers of various kinds because of the wide geographical reach of their networks.

Post-colonial migration and labour migration resulted in the second half of the twentieth century in large Muslim diasporas in the West, and the presence of Sufi orders among these new Muslim communities is increasingly conspicuous (Geaves 2000; Westerlund (ed.) 2004; Malik and Hinnels 2006). In many cases this concerns extensions of Sufi networks in the countries of origin, as is the case of many (though not all) South Asian Sufi communities in Britain (e.g. Werbner 2003) and, most spectacularly, the Senegalese Muridiyya, whose transnational trade networks are largely shaped by their Sufi allegiances (Diouf 2000). The order provides migrants with an environment of trust, a spiritual refuge, a substitute family and a connection with the country of origin. In these cases, local groups belonging to the order are ethnically homogeneous and may consist of people originating from the same region or district.

Other orders have reached out across national and ethnic as well as state boundaries and have found an ethnically mixed following, including Western converts. The earliest Sufi order to find a largely Western following (and to be significantly transformed in the process) was a branch of the Indian Chishtiyya led by Hazrat Inayat Khan (d. 1927), which became known as the International Sufi Movement. Inayat Khan personally established this order in North America and Europe in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Members were not required to convert to Islam, which no doubt facilitated the spread of the order in the West but also placed this order in a rather isolated position vis-à-vis other Sufi orders (Genn 2007).

It took half a century before other Sufi orders made significant inroads among a Western public interested in Eastern spirituality. In some cases, these 'Western' branches were very much like just another New Age movement, with little or no interest in orthodox Islamic doctrine and *shari'a*, but gradually the spiritual practices became embedded in more explicitly Islamic frameworks. Some studies document how Westernised Muslims, after passing through New Age movements and hybrid forms of Sufism, rediscovered and embraced a more orthodox Muslim spiritual discipline (e.g. Haenni and Voix 2007).

Perhaps the most spectacularly successful example of a transnational Sufi order is the Haqqaniyya branch of the Naqshbandiyya, led by Shaykh Nazim al-Qubrusi and his son-in-law and US-based *khalifa*, Hisham Kabbani. Shaykh Nazim, a Western-trained engineer of Turkish Cypriot origin, claims descent on both sides from a long line of Sufi teachers and was initiated into a Daghestani branch of the Naqshbandiyya Khalidiyya. Marrying the daughter of another prominent member of the order, he settled near his master in Damascus in the 1950s, from where he built up a following among the Arabic- and Turkish-speaking communities of the wider region. Following his master's death, he established a second centre in London, where he found a new following among the local Cypriot community but also among British-born Muslims of other ethnic backgrounds, as well as a 'white' British community of followers of the

teachings of Gurdjieff, an early twentieth-century populariser of Eastern spirituality. Hisham Kabbani, who belongs to a Lebanese family with strong Islamic credentials, settled in the United States in the early 1990s and established a network of Sufi centres, reaching out to American-born Muslims as well as to recent converts from various New Age movements (Damrel 2006). More recently, Kabbani has made successful tours of South East Asia, established rapidly expanding local branches of the order and brought a number of existing Sufi networks in the region under his umbrella.

The Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya is what Hermansen (1997) has termed a 'hybrid' order. It has an inner core of devoted disciples who practise the devotions of the order in a 'traditional' way and, especially in Europe and North America, various affiliated cult groups that combine Naqshbandi spiritual exercises with forms of meditation and doctrines of other origins. Branches of different ethnic composition have little contact with one another, but are held together through common loyalty to the charismatic shaykhs Nazim and Hisham. The order is hybrid in yet another sense: some branches combine the methods of the Naqshbandiyya with those of other Sufi orders, notably the Qadiriyya and the Mevleviyye, with which Shaykh Nazim claims a family connection.[24]

'Popular' Islam, Sufi orders and heterodox communities

Sufism has always been relatively tolerant of, and adaptable to, local customs and traditions, and Sufi orders have incorporated what, for lack of a better term, are commonly called 'popular' beliefs and practices (Gellner's 'Low Islam'). One problem with the concept of 'popular Islam' is that it is implicitly defined in contrast to a 'high' Islam, echoing Redfield's 'little tradition' existing in the shadow of a 'great tradition' and similar dichotomies. 'High Islam', however, may be conceived in a variety of ways: as 'official' or state Islam, as the religion of the (traditional) ulama or of puritan reformists, or as that of the urban middle classes. These are by no means the same, and the boundary between 'popular' Islam and any of these conceptions of 'high' Islam is not at all easy to establish, nor does the attempt to do so appear very helpful to a discussion of Sufism.

Some Sufi orders are called 'popular' because they attract the poor and uneducated masses and have loud and ecstatic rituals, while other orders, or different branches of the same orders, may cater to an elite and have more austere devotions. Magic and healing are frequently associated with such 'popular' orders, but certain forms of magic, notably those using verses of the Qur'an for protection or to produce another desired effect, were practised not only by 'popular' magicians but by orthodox ulama as well. The belief in miracles performed by saints is not a monopoly of the uneducated masses either. The visiting of saints' tombs and the celebration of saints' days, with all the attending

festivities and rituals, are also commonly regarded as 'popular' practices, but numerous learned, urban ulama have taken part in and endorsed at least some of these practices. In the Ottoman Empire, certain rites of state were celebrated at the shrine of the saint Eyüp Sultan in Istanbul, which was the centre of a state cult as well as of 'popular' religiosity (Bruinessen 2005).

In fact, different people visiting a saint's shrine may do quite different things there, and the beliefs they hold in connection with the visitation and meanings they associate with the rituals may vary even more widely. Even reformists may visit graves out of respect for the deceased or in order to be reminded of the afterlife, though they would fiercely deny the possibility of intercession by the dead. Especially in rural communities, shrine visitations often constitute the most important religious ritual. Some modernising regimes have attempted to curtail them. All shrines were closed in the Soviet Union and in Kemalist Turkey from 1925 to 1950. When changes of political regime resulted in a lifting of the ban and reopening of major shrines, however, the visitations at once resumed. At some 'popular' shrines, the official religious authorities put up notices outlining what is proper and improper behaviour, demarcating the 'low' from the 'high' visitation practices: visitors are enjoined to salute the deceased and to recite verses of the Qur'an for the benefit of his soul, but all forms of divination, vows and requests for intercession – for instance, in the form of pieces of cloth tied to the gate, a window or a nearby tree – are banned.[25]

Sufi orders are not the only social formations associated with various forms of 'popular' devotion. In many parts of the Muslim world we find heterodox communities that practise rituals and hold beliefs that clearly separate them from mainstream Islam. The Alevis of Turkey, the Druze, the Ismaʿilis of Syria and the Indian subcontinent, the Yezidis and Ahl-i Haqq of Kurdistan, the *abangan* of Java and numerous similar communities belong to the religious periphery of Islam. Their beliefs and rituals are to some extent shaped by Islam and reminiscent of those of Sufis, but they retain numerous elements of other origins, and they have kept themselves at some distance from the ulama as well as from the state (Geertz 1960; Kehl-Bodrogi et al. (eds) 1997).

Transformations of Alevism in Turkey

The name Alevi is a blanket term for heterodox or syncretistic communities of various origins living in Asia Minor and parts of south-eastern Europe that share a veneration of ʿAli, besides a number of other features. The major rituals as well as many of the beliefs held by these communities are very different from those of orthodox Islam. The core ritual is the *cem*, a meeting in which all adult members of the village community participate, husbands and wives together, and in which sacred poems are sung and some special food and drink are consecrated and ritually shared. It is an almost ideal Durkheimian ritual of solidarity-making, celebrating the community. One particular type of *cem*, the *görgü cem*,

has in fact as its explicit aim the restoration of social harmony after this has been disturbed by disputes. There is a class of hereditary religious specialists called *dede*, without whose presence the *cem* cannot take place and who are considered as the chief repositories of religious knowledge. A corpus of sacred poetry, long handed down orally (although some *dede* or singers kept notebooks for memory), contains the most important religious ideas.

In the course of time, and because of the increasing penetration of the Ottoman state, many of these communities were gradually brought into closer conformity with 'High Islam'. The Bektashi Sufi order, which had rituals and esoteric doctrines that were sophisticated versions of those of village Alevis but which was patronised by powerful members of the religious and bureaucratic establishment (Birge 1937), appears to have been instrumental in this process. By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were many Alevi communities – especially in the European part of Turkey and the western half of Asia Minor – in which at least some people regularly prayed, fasted during Ramadan and performed the *hajj*. Rural-to-urban migration, which began on a large scale in the second half of the twentieth century, initially speeded up the integration of individual Alevi migrants into the national mainstream. Gellner's claim that modernity erodes the social foundations of 'folk Islam' has a particularly strong plausibility in the case of Alevi belief and ritual, for the *cem* and other rituals were intimately connected with the village community, and whoever left the village thereby gave up Alevi religious practice. Alevi identity was, moreover, a social stigma, so that many migrants attempted to hide their religious origins in their new environment. Other rural heterodox communities were affected in much the same way by the break-up of their isolation and their social and economic integration into the nation state. Individually, members of these communities adapted the outward behaviour of the majority, becoming practising orthodox Muslims in some cases or, more commonly, non-practising, 'secular' Muslims.

But this is not how it ended. Several of these heterodox communities, instead of gradually merging into the orthodox mainstream, experienced a revival in the urban environment and developed 'high', learned forms of their beliefs and rituals (Olsson 1998). Most remarkably this was the case of Turkey's Alevis, who, as larger numbers of them moved to the cities, often clustered together in compact urban neighbourhoods and, in response to discrimination, established voluntary associations that became the nuclei of new forms of community life. Efforts by the state to impose a Sunni Turkish orthodoxy through obligatory religious education and the appointment of religious personnel even to Alevi villages strengthened an awareness among the Alevis of their being different, and stimulated debates on what Alevism 'really' was. Sacred texts – the religious poetry and a sort of catechism that had been handed down in *dede* families – were made available to everyone in cheap printed editions. Alevi intellectuals, who emerged as the new, self-made authorities that largely replaced the *dede*s in all

but their ritual roles, attempted to reformulate and systematise Alevi teachings. The urban voluntary associations, which had initially been political or cultural, assumed religious roles as well and organised *cem* rituals, adapting the traditions of closed village communities to the needs of heterogeneous urban congregations for expressing a common, national Alevi identity. Rather than simply fading away, Alevism self-consciously presented itself as an alternative form of Islam, standing beside and remaining separate from the Sunni mainstream.[26]

Javanese syncretism

In the entirely different context of South East Asia, similar but even more complex developments took place. In the mid-twentieth century, perhaps a majority of the Muslims adhered to various forms of syncretism, which have, since Clifford Geertz's influential study (1960), come to be generally referred to as *abangan*. The division of Javanese society into syncretists and scripturalist Muslims (called *santri* by Geertz and *putihan* in the earlier literature) was exacerbated by the political polarisation of early independent Indonesia but found its origins in the nineteenth century, as a recent study by Merle Ricklefs (2007) has documented.

Javanese spiritual teachers typically taught eclectic combinations of esoteric metaphysical doctrines, meditation techniques and magic. Sufi ideas, especially of the *wahdat al-wujud* kind, and Sufi prayers and spiritual techniques were readily borrowed, adapted and put to new uses by such teachers, along with older indigenous, Indic and Chinese traditions. There was, prior to the nineteenth century, no sharp dividing line between Sufi masters and syncretistic mystical teachers, and the Islamic content of the teachings gradually increased over the centuries. From the late nineteenth century onwards, however, many of these teachers took a negative attitude towards scripturalist Islam, some distancing themselves from Islam altogether, others claiming that their own teachings rather than those of the Muslim reformists represented 'true Islam'. In the early twentieth century, several groups of disciples around a master became institutionalised and transformed into organised esoteric (*kebatinan*) movements, with formalised and systematised teachings, standardised ritual practices and a formal board. Some *kebatinan* movements have their own sacred scripture, received by the founding master during meditation.

Kebatinan, at least as it developed in some of the mystical movements, thus came to represent a scripturalised, 'high' form of *abangan* religiosity, deliberately presented as an alternative to 'high' Islam. During the years when they appeared to enjoy political support, the *kebatinan* movements consolidated themselves and attracted large followings. In the late twentieth century, however, the political balance turned against them and they were marginalised. Scripturalist Islam gained the ascendancy, politically as well as demographically, but within the Islamic spectrum the 'orthodox' Sufi orders were spectacularly successful.[27]

Conclusion

The Sufi orders, which seemed to be on the verge of disappearing by the mid-twentieth century, are alive and well in most parts of the Muslim world today and are increasingly active in the West as well. The social and demographic transformations of Muslim societies, and the rise of political Islam and Salafism, have not marginalised Sufism (though they may have caused a shift towards more 'learned' varieties of Sufism). Rather, Sufism as a spiritual doctrine and practice has gained added attraction to many Muslims in the modern world as an alternative to the political and puritan styles of Islam.

Summary of chapter

The term 'Sufism' refers to a wide range of religious phenomena – including doctrines, devotional practices and forms of association – that revolve around efforts to purify the soul and that in most cases presume the existence of charismatic personalities capable of mediating between ordinary humans and the world of spirits and ultimately God. The most common manifestations of Sufism, the Sufi orders (*tariqa*, pl, *turuq*), are voluntary associations with more or less standardised devotions and meditation techniques, typically led by a chain of charismatic leaders. Various forms of 'popular' religiosity – the veneration of saints, ecstasy-inducing techniques, magical practices – may (but need not) be associated with some of the *turuq*.

Scholars of various disciplines have commonly assumed that Sufism, and especially the 'popular' practices associated with it, would inevitably wither away as society modernised, because of the twin forces of secularisation and Islamic reform. The most influential conceptual models of religious change in Muslim societies insisted on a shift from the mystical–magical styles of Sufism towards increased scripturalism. Developments in the last quarter of the twentieth century showed this assumption of the decline of Sufism to be mistaken and suggested that, rather than disappearing, the forms in which Sufism manifested itself changed in response to social and political dynamics.

In the age of colonial expansion, Sufi orders actually flourished and gained a mass following. On the extent of their actual involvement in anti-colonial resistance, however, there has been considerable disagreement in recent scholarship. The apparent decline of the orders in late colonial and post-colonial societies has been attributed to the emergence of new types of voluntary association that to some extent replaced Sufi orders, taking over some of their functions.

Various reformist currents in Islam have been fiercely critical of Sufism and especially of some of the 'popular' beliefs and practices they associated with it. Conversely, many were drawn to Sufism because of their dissatisfaction with Reformists' legalistic attitude and rejection of local culture. Scripturalism (and especially its most radical variety, Salafism) and Sufism have often seemed each other's opposites, and been considered as competing trends within mainstream Islam. However, various forms of accommodation have always existed. Reformist trends have emerged within Sufism as well as in opposition to it. Numerous Sufis, even among those known for their charismatic qualities, were also ulama well versed in scriptural studies. Scripture-based and shariʿa-oriented brands of Sufism have gained

greater salience. Among heterodox communities such as Turkey's Alevis, which share some features with the more 'popular' Sufi orders, there has also been a tendency towards the scripturalisation of the belief system.

State policies towards the Sufi orders, which have ranged from patronage to prohibition, have had an obvious impact on their social prominence, but more remarkable have been the intricate adaptations to changing circumstances that allowed certain orders to survive even under adverse conditions and to maintain their social relevance. Several orders have grown spectacularly under conditions of increased transnational communication and migration.

Questions

1. Which factors contributed to the increased visibility and social salience of Sufi orders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?
2. Why are Salafism and Sufism commonly considered as polar opposites? Has the arrival of modernity entailed an enduring shift from one to the other? Does the author consider them as incompatible, and why?
3. How are the oscillations or cyclical changes between two types of religiosity explained in the theoretical models discussed in this chapter? Do the models allow for an end to these cycles and, if so, owing to what factors?
4. On what grounds have modernisation theorists predicted the gradual disappearance of 'popular' religion? Has the history of the twentieth century borne out these predictions?
5. Is it correct or useful to subsume Sufism under the category of 'popular' religion? What are the problematic aspects of the latter category?
6. What is meant by the term 'Neo-Sufism', and why is this a contested concept? Are there modern expressions of Sufism to which the term Neo-Sufism would not apply?
7. What aspects does Alevism have in common with Sufi orders? Are there also aspects that sharply distinguish them from one another?
8. What impact has increased transnational communication had on the position of Sufism in Muslim communities worldwide? Has it affected the beliefs and practices, or the internal organisation and structure of authority, of certain Sufi orders?

Notes

1. The Wahhabis, named (by their opponents) after their leading scholar Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhab, considered all beliefs and practices that cannot be accounted for in the Qurʾan or 'authentic' hadith as reprehensible innovations (*bidʿa dalala*) and declared all Muslims who did not share their point of view unbelievers. The Ahl-i Hadith were a similar though less militant puritan reform movement in India, which aimed to restore pristine Islam through a strict rejection of customary practices as well as classical scholarship and a return to the (authentic) hadith as the sole criterion of correct Islamic belief and practice. The term 'Salafi' refers to a variety of movements that orient themselves towards the first generations of Muslims, *al-salaf al-salih* (the 'pious predecessors') and reject later 'innovations'. It is the preferred self-designation of Wahhabis and related puritans.
2. On the 'littérature de surveillance' and the study of Sufi orders, see O'Fahey and Radtke (1993: 61–4), Bruinessen (1998) and Knysh (2002). The best-known, now

much outdated, studies of this genre are Rinn (1884), Le Chatelier (1897) and Depont and Coppolani (1897). Snouck Hurgronje's work is of a different quality and has outlasted that of his colleagues. On the Russian literature of this genre, see Knysh (2002).

3. Rachida Chih (2007) has shown how even within a single order (the Khalwatiyya in Egypt) there are considerable differences in organisation, relations between the shaykh and his disciples, and function of the lodges.
4. The most outspoken representative of this view (the 'Islamic Enlightenment' thesis) is Reinhard Schulze (e.g. Schulze 1996), its fiercest critic is Bernd Radtke (O'Fahey and Radtke 1993; Radtke 1996). See also the discussion in the section 'The controversy about Neo-Sufism' in this chapter.
5. Gammer (1994) claims the imams were themselves also *khalifa* of this order and that the structure of the order helped in coordinating the resistance; Kemper (2005) contests this and finds no solid evidence supporting that claim. Both scholars are in agreement, however, on the enormous authority the leading Khalidiyya shaykhs in the region enjoyed among the population, and on the fact that the imams derived much of their legitimacy from these shaykhs.
6. This is Fazlur Rahman's summary definition (1979: 206). Other influential statements outlining 'Neo-Sufism' are in Voll (1982: 36–9) and Levtzion and Voll (1987: 7–13).
7. Ahmad al-Tijani claimed to have had a personal encounter with the Prophet, who taught him the special litanies of his order (Abun-Nasr 1965: 19); Ahmad b. Idris was similarly taught a prayer by Khidr in the presence of the Prophet, as was his teacher's teacher, al-Dabbagh (O'Fahey 1990: 42–8).
8. A small selection of relevant titles: O'Fahey (1990); Vikør (1995); Radtke (1996, 1999, 2005); Schulze (1996); Cornell (1998); Hoffman (1999); Knysh (2002).
9. The names of the Sufis of whom Ibn Taymiyya speaks with great respect are listed by Meier (1999: 313). Julian Johansen (1996: 189) quotes the contemporary Egyptian Sufi shaykh Muhammad Zaki Ibrahim as claiming that Ibn Taymiyya's description of 'true *tasawwuf*' and his disciple Ibn al-Qayyim's Sufi commentaries are 'entirely in support of their Way'.
10. This compendium, *Tanwir al-qulub*, remains widely used in places as far apart as Turkey and Indonesia and is regularly reprinted.
11. The terms Salafi and (Muslim) Modernist have been used to refer to movements of quite divergent religious and ideological positions. All reject the classical learned tradition in favour of direct recourse to the Qurʾan and hadith, but there are great differences in the degree to which rational interpretation of these sources is accepted and in the attitude towards political action.
12. Gellner developed this model in a series of publications, in its most elaborate and most frequently quoted form in *Muslim Society* (1981). A succinct restatement, more explicit in its treatment of Sufism, is given in Gellner (1992). Much of the argument is based on his fieldwork observations and is already present in his dissertation on a pilgrimage centre in the Middle Atlas (Gellner 1969).
13. Hume's *Natural History of Religion*, quoted in Gellner (1981: 9).
14. As concrete examples, Gellner obviously had the alliance of the puritan scholar Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhab and Ibn Saʿud's tribesmen in mind, besides the much earlier puritan movements of the Almoravids and Almohads in medieval Moroccan history.
15. An important and sophisticated study of sainthood in Morocco, based on a

thorough study of the relevant Arabic sources (and highly critical of both Gellner and Geertz), is Vincent Cornell's *Realm of the Saint* (1998). Cogent criticism of Gellner's treatment of Sufism is also offered by Henry Munson (1993: esp. ch. 4) and Sami Zubaida (1995). A sweeping critique of Geertz's and Gellner's anthropological representation of Islam more generally is Varisco (2005).

16. I adopt these terms from Buehler (1998), who distinguishes these two types of shaykh in the Indian Naqshbandiyya and believes the mediating shaykh to be a relatively recent (nineteenth-century) phenomenon in this order. The great Naqshbandi shaykhs of earlier centuries had been directing shaykhs, and so were the revivalists and reformists of the Deoband school (established in 1867), who sharply distinguished themselves from the mediating shaykhs and shrine cults of the Barelvi movement, the traditionalist and popular mainstream in Indian Islam.
17. Geertz (1968: 49, 51–2) does mention Moroccan Sufi orders as one of three institutional settings in which the genealogical concept of sanctity is expressed and notes that by 1939 nearly a fifth of Moroccan adults were affiliated with one order or the other but provides no further discussion.
18. In an interesting revision of secularisation theory in a perspective of systems theory and globalisation, Peter Beyer (2006) argues that functional differentiation entails not only the increasing separation of religion from other functional domains (the market, medicine, education, etc.) but also the emergence of an autonomous religious domain.
19. Gilsenan (1982: 229–50) himself already noticed this when he revisited Egypt during the period of 'opening' under Sadat; later studies by Hoffman (1995), Johansen (1996) and Chih (2000) document the flourishing of Sufism as a public discourse and the social significance of the Sufi orders.
20. Saktanber (2002) is based on research in a housing estate affiliated with this order. On *sohbet* and other forms of disciplining as well as the foundations, see Silverstein (2007).
21. On the founder of the Nur movement, Said Nursi, and his ambivalent relationship with the established Sufi orders, see the excellent study by Mardin (1989). The Gülen movement is the subject of a rapidly increasing number of academic studies, e.g. Yavuz and Esposito (2003).
22. On Iqbal and Sufism, see Annemarie Schimmel's empathetic study (1963) and Sirriyeh (1999: 124–37). The influence of Rumi on Soroush's thought is evident in the numerous quotations in his major writings (e.g. Soroush 2000).
23. Johansen (1996: 25–6) quotes comments of the late-nineteenth-century Egyptian journalist al-Nadim expressing shame at what foreign observers might think when watching popular Sufi practices. Almost a century later, an article in a contemporary Egyptian newspaper expressed similar feelings of shame at the ecstatic behaviour at a *mawlid* that had become a tourist attraction (ibid.: 164).
24. Shaykh Nazim has authorised certain *khalifa*s to teach the whirling dance (*semah*) of the Mevlevi order, and at least one *khalifa* teaches a combination of Qadiri, Naqshbandi and Mevlevi techniques.
25. Signs containing a long list of 'superstitious' beliefs and actions that are forbidden have been put up, for instance, at the shrine of Eyüp Sultan in Istanbul (Bruinessen 2005) and that of Baha' al-din Naqshband in Bukhara (Zarcone 1995).
26. There is a growing literature on the emergence of Alevism as a modern religious

formation in its own right. Vorhoff (1995) is an interesting study of the sudden eruption of writing on Alevi scripture, beliefs, history and sociology by Alevi intellectuals. The volumes edited by Kehl-Bodrogi et al. (1997), Olsson et al. (1998) and White and Jongerden (2003) contain numerous valuable contributions. Olsson (1998) provides a more general discussion of the emergence of 'scripturalist' versions of these largely orally transmitted religious traditions.

27. The rise of *kebatinan* movements, their ambivalent relations with Sufi orders and processes of bureaucratization in both are discussed more extensively in Bruinessen (2007). A useful overview of *kebatinan* movements and their changing relationship with Islam and the state is Stange (1986).

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CHAPTER 6

Colonialism and Islamic Law

Ebrahim Moosa

Introduction

Commonplaces about Muslim laws in the colonial encounter are as firmly established in folklore as Shahrazad's uninterrupted thousand nights of story-telling, Newton's apple or Watt's steam kettle.[1] The narrative is almost always unidirectional: the colonisers occupied Muslim lands, dislodged native laws and replaced them with European ones (al-Shafʿie 2003: 8). There is, of course, nothing factually incorrect about this description save for what is omitted in the attempted simplification.

Law is not only part of the ideological apparatus of states; it is also part of a cultural matrix. Apart from mobilising multiple forms of power – military, political and economic – colonial rule also relied on a complex apparatus of cultural technologies to assert itself (Dirks 1992: 5). The domain of Muslim law is one such power-*cum*-cultural complex. If we view Muslim law through the prisms of colonialism, globalisation and transnationalism in different locales, what emerges is a more complex picture. With the aid of a few snapshots, one can track how the ideas and practices of modernity and colonialism found their counterpoints in Muslim institutions and traditions and, especially, how modernity impacted on the practice of Muslim laws.[2] In order to come to grips with developments in the colonial and post-colonial eras marked by globalisation, it will be helpful to examine Muslim laws by means of the vocabularies of transculturation, counterpoints or contrapuntal developments, evolving social imaginaries, networks and the legacies of legal Orientalism, each of which will be discussed below.

Transculturation

If European colonisers intended to make their non-European colonies dependent on the European metropoles, then this aspiration was not entirely successful. The aftermath of colonialism showed a different picture. Against the pretensions of imperial universality, the colonial encounter called attention to globally interconnected communities of the coloniser and colonised, aiming the spotlight on the messiness of transculturation. The pendant to transculturation was acculturation, keeping in mind the significant differences between the two. Acculturation implied the acquisition of culture in a one-directional manner and

a linear arrangement of power: from the powerful to the powerless (Devereux and Loeb 1943). However, when an existing culture was lost or uprooted by a successor culture (deculturation), it was often replaced by a new culture (neoculturation) stemming from a process of transculturation. In the latter scenario, the changes were non-linear and unpredictable. Transculturation aptly applies to what happened to Muslim laws in the colonies. Despite the attempts to eliminate or replace Muslim laws in the colonies, the upshot was that new Muslim legal cultures came into existence. And, as many as the colonisers resisted the laws of the colonised, they were forced to countenance native law even to the point of having to accommodate it in the bureaucracies of the colonial metropoles in legislative activities and appeals processes.

Counterpoints

It goes without saying that the economic ventures in the colonies were meant to consolidate the nation state in the European metropoles. Ironically, with these enterprises the colonial powers were, in Dirks's words (1992: 4), also 'bringing both colonialism and culture back home'. One way that colonialism came back home to the metropoles was that the British legal and political systems both had to accommodate Muslim law, often called Muhammadan law. Special Privy Council deliberations in Britain were set aside for appeals from India. British lawyers and administrators received specialised legal training in Muslim law; the bureaucracy had to make adjustments, apart from making available translations of Muslim legal texts into English. And, in India, British judges were forced to employ Muslim experts as assessors in courts.

In the self-fashioning of the colonies, what were perceived to be centres and margins were constantly shifting entities. Let us take the case of Egypt. Compared to France and England, Egypt as a colony in the Mediterranean was a peripheral country. But often colonies served as counterpoints to other regional colonial domains. In other words, the 'peripheries' were actually turned into 'centres' with respect to other 'margins' (Coronil 1995: p. xiv). Note how both the French and the British colonial regimes styled Egypt as the centre of the Middle East (Maghraoui 2006: 74–86). Delhi became the centre serving the regions of Malaya and the African East Coast, while Cairo played the same role for parts of the Middle East region. Both Egypt and India as colonies, and hence as peripheries to Europe, were central in the way they each shaped legal and military developments in other parts of the colonial world.

The colonial encounter also forged new cognitive categories and structured sentiments and emotions that can no longer be attributed to any single cause or cultural effect. Edward Said convincingly showed that our existence in the modern world provoked deeply transformative effects marked by what he called counterpoint or the contrapuntal: 'No one today is purely *one* thing' (Said 1994: 407). The outcome of imperialism, Said continued, was that it 'consolidated

the mixtures of cultures and identities on a global scale' (ibid.). 'Survival in fact is about the connections between things,' he noted and therefore, 'it is more rewarding and more difficult to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about "us"' (ibid.: 408). In trying to understand contemporary developments in Muslim laws and politics, it is critical to be vigilant of the colonial legacy (Spivak 1999: 215). Without wishing to mobilise the past in the service of the present, it might be more instructive to view contemporary contestations over Muslim laws as part of the unfinished nature of the past, especially in the post-colony (Banerjee 2004: 261).

Social imaginary

Modernity and colonialism ushered in a new social imaginary drawing on new theories of natural law from the seventeenth century (Taylor 2004: 5, 62). New such imaginaries fostered by the insights of John Locke's notions of social contract gradually pushed older theories of society to the margins. One theory of society that colonial rule attempted to displace was what Muslims referred to as governance, driven by the normative juridical–moral discourses known as *shari'a* or *fiqh*. Popularly known as Islamic law, especially after the formation of nation states in Muslim societies, *shari'a* is the fulcrum of a Muslim moral vision. It is also variegated and shaped by the complex history of Muslim schisms and sects ranging over centuries. And 'all history', wrote George Orwell ([1949] 2003: 41), 'was a palimpsest scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary'.

Like ageing parchment, the encrusted layers of modern Muslim law also personified the layers of turbulent political struggles of multiple Muslim societies and communities vis-à-vis a plethora of conquering colonial powers. Simultaneously, it also revealed the searing internal struggles over the meaning of norms and values.

But there was an additional theological dimension to Muslim laws. Since norms and values were partly framed with reference to a divine or a heteronomous authority, the contestation over what was moral truth had to be negotiated in the dynamic tension formed between human production of norms, on the one hand, and divine instruction, on the other. These contestations gave rise to particularly intense struggles and debates in the history of Muslim societies generating a plurality of intra-Muslim systems of norms. What gave it added poignancy was the fact that these struggles over norms and values occurred in the fertile domain of culture.

Networks

What people today view as Islamdom's globalised networks of power and culture were preceded centuries earlier by certain continuities of Muslim peoples who shared an expansive 'inhabited quarter' (*oikumene*). A modality of law was

integral to this Islamicate *oikumene*, as exemplified by the itinerant legal expert cum judge Abu ʿAbd Allah Muhammad b. ʿAbd Allah al-Luwayti al-Tanji, better known as Ibn Battuta (d. 1369 or 1377) (Hodgson 1977: 109; Cornell 2005). Ibn Battuta's experiences of living in culturally contiguous and networked societies were not an anomaly (Hodgson 1977: 89–90). If history and human life were deemed to be performative acts, then society too was 'an ever living, never completed network of actions' (Lapidus 1975: 41). The root metaphor of networks defining Islamic civilisation had not only survived, but, thanks to the European colonisation of Muslim regions, acquired a new meaning considerably different from its premodern instantiation (Gilmartin 2005: 53). Globalisation gives the networks of old a new meaning: expanding integration and integration on a planetary scale. The ideological framework of globalisation is liberalism, which favours free trade and the free movement of capital (Cooper 2005: 96). Now the post-colony was a network of citizens of former colonies who have relocated to former European and North American metropoles by way of myriads of advanced communication technologies. Apart from a certain sense of unity and singularity, more significant were the animated debates and contestations about the meaning of Muslim law and morality in a variety of global networks in both Muslim minority and majority contexts. One had only to reflect on how the controversy over women wearing the scarf in public schools animated Muslims living in France, just as it energised those who observed the wearing of the scarf in Turkey. Similarly, suggestions about a possible role for Muslim family law created heightened anxiety in Canadian and British political circles while raising analogous tensions in Egypt and Pakistan over governance and loyalty to *shariʿa* norms in those states.

At the heart of the debate about Muslim laws in the colonial and post-colonial periods were the narratives pertaining to the *shariʿa* as a moral vision. In both, the displacement and adaptation of Islamic law is the desideratum to recover or reinvent Muslim social imaginaries of gratifyingly complex proportions, a reality often ignored by modern historians of Muslim law.[3] Attempts at reform and renovation of legal and social practices often involved a certain reductionism, if not distortion of phenomena. Often social reformers in their bid to formulate a rationale as to why a practice had to be changed or altered inferred the meaning and purpose of such a practice, denuding it of its complexity and multiple functions. Social reformers engaged in reformulating and restating older practices and doctrines were also imputing new moral economies to practices. The European penchant to reduce phenomena in the legal and social practices of the Orient gave rise to new moral economies, better known as Orientalism.

Legal Orientalism

If 'legal Orientalism' ever had a far-reaching and invidious effect on discursive and existential domains, then surely it was in terms of Islamic and customary

laws. And very little of this Orientalism has thus far been conceded or even merited serious scholarly attention (Said 1978; Strawson 2001). Edward Said (1978: 78) surely misread legal practices as literary productions, which in his view had only 'symbolic significance'. He understated the interest of colonial officials in legal writings and translations. If Said were wrong with respect to the artefacts of Orientalism, then his description of Orientalism applied to the European Orientalists as well as to certain traditionalist Muslim modes of thinking, especially those espoused by the ulama: 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"' (ibid.: 2). While some ulama often viewed Orientalist scholars to be persons of dubious integrity, there was also a significant overlap in their respective approaches and methodologies of Islamic law between these two groups of scholars.

Legal discourses and institutions were more than just symbolic; they were also sites that produced the very knowledge that differentiated between the colonised subject and the coloniser. Law provided the apparatus and means for the enforcement of these differentiated types of knowledge. Yet, the ulama and modernised elites in colonised Muslim countries collaborated with the colonisers to enforce different modes of Islamic law, which they felt were vital to the well-being of their communities. Such mutual shackling made it more difficult to unearth the subterranean ways in which power functioned in colonial societies; the legacies of the coloniser and colonised were intertwined (Chaudhuri 2006). Just as the colonised sought to be liberated from the political yoke of the coloniser, they were also equally shackled through legal and economic systems to the legacies of the coloniser. In order to avoid monochromatic maps of the coloniser versus the colonised type, we would do well to interrogate Islamic law during the colonial and post-colonial periods through the prism of transculturation. What legal discourses then reveal are a series of contrapuntal dependencies, networks of movements of people and ideas across multiple temporalities and spaces. Not only does this enable us to plot the transitions in the paradigms of knowledge and social imaginaries more carefully, but it also enables us to view the intertwining of legal, economic and political systems in more nuanced ways.

Europe's tryst with Muslim law

In a curious mix of political and theological sentiments, most European colonial administrators and viceroys held the studied conviction that it was their manifest destiny to save non-Europeans from their own regressive and unenlightened cultures. It was the Whig theory of history writ large: a near providential plan gradually to spread light into the dark places of the globe. Lord Cromer ([1908] 2000: 124) wrote that every Englishman 'was convinced that his mission was to save Egyptian society'. He described Egyptians as the 'rawest of raw material'

out of which the 'civilised' Englishman 'had to evolve something like order' (ibid.: 126, 131). The Englishman, he continued, will exercise his national genius and adopt a middle course and make compromises in order to work an Arab system that was by all accounts unworkable. Part of that English genius was not to annex Egypt, but to do as much good as if it were annexed; the English would not interfere in domestic governance but would make sure the Turkish viceroy to Egypt, known as the Khedive, and his ministers conformed to English views.

Cromer was completely oblivious of his own contradictions. While claiming not to proselytise, he nevertheless claimed that England, among all of Europe's nations, will strive to inculcate a 'distinctly Christian code of morality' among the colonised subjects (ibid.: 134). Not only did Cromer harbour supremacist beliefs like Warren Hastings or Lord Macaulay did in India, but he held all Orientals, whether Copt, Hindu or Muslim, in contempt.[4] While the Egyptian Copts, unlike the Muslims, adhered to a religion that 'admits of progress', they too remained immune to change, thanks to Islamdom's corrupting influence on Oriental Christianity, which was only further aggravated by the fact that the Copts were first and foremost Oriental people (ibid.: 202).

Most troubling to colonial administrators and many Orientalists was that Islam did not neatly fall into a prescribed framework of religion with which they were familiar. While most wished to see Islam take the same turn as Western Christianity, follow the post-Enlightenment route and turn into a private matter, most were befuddled by Islam as a cultural artefact. Islam as a civilisation, described by post-Enlightenment assessments as a religious tradition, did not neatly fit in with what was familiar in the West and colonialism's enlightening designs. Islam was a protean 'savage', one with a history to boot that made it fall somewhere between the categories of the savage and the civilised, vacillating between the 'West's contempt for what was familiar and its shivers of delight in – or fear of – novelty' (Said 1978: 59). Cromer ([1908] 2000: 134) best illustrated this dilemma by first acknowledging Islam's great impact on the world stage, but then went on to add that, as a 'social system, Islam was a complete failure'. Cromer listed among Islam's premier vices its attitude towards women, a tolerance for slavery, and its reputation of being intolerant towards other religions. All the while Cromer opposed the suffragette's movement in England.

In the coloniser's imaginary, the Muslim had first to be cast as a schizophrenic, in the same way that the Spanish theologian Francisco de Vitoria (d. 1546) portrayed the indigenous Indian in the Americas: a person who was curiously encompassed in the sameness of humanity and yet different. The primal divide also became the imperial division between the *barbari*, who were not sovereign, Christian or civilised, and the European nations, who perfectly embodied all these qualities (Fitzpatrick 2001: 155). This analytic reverberated with John Stuart Mill's decree (1997: 48) in *On Liberty*, justifying the claim that 'despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians,

provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end'.

But the main problem for Cromer, as for most European colonisers, was the *shari'a*. Here Cromer echoed the views of the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel ([1827] 1988: 357), who deemed Islam, like Judaism, a form of Christianity *manqué*, because it lacked a concrete inward subjectivity in pure thought. What distinguished pure thought from its opposite in Hegel's view was the specific role and sensate nature of rituals in both Judaism and Islam. The wisdom underlying the practice of ritual, described as the *cultus*, was in Hegel's view a definite indicator that these traditions were undeveloped, unlike Western Christianity, which aspired to inwardness and pure thought (ibid.: 374). The *shari'a*, in Cromer's tinted view ([1908] 2000: 135), consisted of 'traditions which cluster round the Koran, and crystallise religion and law into one inseparable and immutable whole, with the result that all elasticity is taken away from the social system'.

Cromer was, of course, aware of the fact that Muslim scholars in his day were engaged in labours of interpreting ancient doctrines to meet the contingencies of the day. However, all those 'well-meaning scholars' only 'tortured their brains', he dismissively observed, to show that 'the legal principles and social system of the seventh century can, by some strained and intricate process of reasoning, be consistently and logically made to conform with the civilised practices of the twentieth century' (ibid.: 136). If only Cromer had recalled the history of Roman law and Common law, he might have restrained the sarcasm in his utterances. But, as was characteristic of all types of reductionism and visionary cosmologies, of which Orientalism was only one, it was also profoundly anti-empirical. Despite an awareness of the complex intellectual investments Muslims had made over the centuries in the discourses of law, Cromer could with ease dismiss customs and norms that were based on 'religious law' to constitute 'a grip of iron from which there is no escape' (ibid.). Cromer failed to appreciate that his own insistence on a Christian code of morality might have served as an analogy for him to grasp what the *shari'a* meant to Muslims. Perhaps he found Christian morality so exceptionally refined that the very thought of comparison was deemed offensive.

Cromer was not the only one to hold such views. Even an informed administrator reputed as an expert in Muslim law, the Dutch Orientalist C. Snouck Hurgronje (1916: 137), could say with ease that the stamp of eternity marked the codes of law of Judaism and Islam 'whose influence has worked as an impediment to the life of the adherents of those religions and the free intercourse of other people with them as well'. How Islam could have evolved into a transnational community that was upheld by a strong juridical-theology or ethics over centuries went completely unaccounted for. While himself a complex man who might also have converted to Islam in Arabia, Snouck Hurgronje could

with magisterial authority write: 'The treasuries of Islam are excessively full of rubbish that has become entirely useless; and for nine or ten centuries they have not been submitted to a revision deserving that name' (ibid.: 139). Though Snouck Hurgronje was better informed than Cromer, given his familiarity with Muslim laws, his Orientalism steered him to view his data about Islam as a closed system. Since his claims sustained an exceptional form of being (ontological reasons), no amount of empirical material could challenge, alter or dislodge his narrowly formulated views. Thus, he too held reservations about the *shari'a* similar to those that vexed the Englishman, Cromer (Snouck Hurgronje: 141–56).

Scores of Western experts of Muslim law, legal historian John Strawson charged, were guilty of legal Orientalism, including such renowned scholars as Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht, who went beyond their scholarly assessments and decried the deficiencies of Muslim law as a stagnant entity and, hence, impervious to change.[5] This may in part be explained if we designate language as a site for the discursive practices of colonialism (Spivak 1999). Encoded in language and its dynamism of mediation, colonial authorities were able to declare war on native practices and give effect to invasive transformations. The language of desire and the will to govern deployed by colonial authorities, theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak pointed out, was part of an elaborate 'fantasy'. From Egypt to India, colonial officials could deploy and project their desires on the colonised with the use of fearful images and figures artfully disguised as policies and law. To do so, it was necessary that desire and the law both appeared to be a singular expression of will, or, as Nietzsche would coin it, it had to be exhibited as a will to power.

Playing devil's advocate, Spivak (1999: 216–17) verbalises the voice of the colonial master addressed to the colonial subject: 'Our desire is your law if you govern in our name, even before that desire has been articulated as a law to be obeyed.' It was from such a privileged location of desire, disguised as law, that Lord Cromer ([1908] 2000: 882–3) could sonorously exclaim his civilising mission: 'The new generation of Egyptians has to be persuaded or forced into imbibing the true spirit of Western civilisation.' And, in India, Warren Hastings could, with astonishing candour, state that Muslim criminal law was a 'barbarous construction, and contrary to the first principle of civil society' (Jain 1966: 492).

Fuelled by his convictions, Hastings acted unflinchingly. He displaced the existing Muslim criminal law applicable in Bengal. Muslim criminal law was communitarian in ethos; it remedied crimes of injury, homicide and injustice by offering persons and communities appropriate compensation and/or retribution. Under colonial rule, this dispensation was changed. From then on it was the colonial state that designed and implemented criminal law, not the community affected. In other words, a shift was enforced from a previously

communitarian ethos of Muslim public law and ethics to a new state-centred morality that contracted itself to the individual, promoting autonomy and not community. The goal was obvious: to tailor Muslim practices in order that they would synchronise with the demands and rhythms of the nation state that was being crafted in embryonic form.

The state and the transculturation of Muslim laws

Each modern Muslim nation state told a unique story about the transformation of the cultural, political and economic landscapes but also how colonial laws had been transplanted into new domains. How pre-colonial legal and moral systems had morphed into their current iterations will have to be dealt with elsewhere, even though versions of the story of transculturation are fairly well known and documented.[6]

Less known is how transculturation affected the practice and logic of Muslim laws. Colonial politics inaugurated several significant changes in the conception, practice and articulation of Muslim laws. Generally speaking, before the advent of European colonialism, the ulama, the religious authorities, held a particular place in Muslim society. While many ulama held positions outside the state, some were also in the employ of political authorities. From time to time, either individual ulama or groups were critical of the caliph and his practices, or there was tension between the state and its ulama adversaries. The caliph or his equivalent was merely the steward of the law, in so far as he was required to create an environment conducive to the application of *shari'a* norms. Such norms were applied by way of *shari'a* governance (*siyasa shar'iyya*). Cumulatively, the discourses and practices constituted the 'norm of revelation' (*hukm al-shar'*) (Kawtharani [1990] 2001: 41). The latter aimed at immunising the community from certain disreputable public displays of drunkenness, adultery and rebellion. In order effectively to create such a public environment, the state could enforce certain laws properly backed up by its coercive authority, so that one can in limited instances talk of 'law' proper. Otherwise, Muslim law was really a nomocractic order – one regulated by norms arrived at consensually, enforced by a theocentric moral authority and regulated by individuals and communities of coercion. In such earlier models of norm-based communities, the state had a minimal role. But, with the advent of the modern nation state, the secular state gained a greater and direct stake in the application of the law and thus became a major stakeholder. Alongside the modern nation state's development, the ulama too have gained a great deal of authority in nation state contexts. As an independent entity they have, in many places, gained the power to legitimate or delegitimate state action in the sphere of religion and public policy matters that were intimately related to religion in ways that might not have been true in earlier centuries.

Colonialism's most significant transformation in the legal traditions of colonised countries was that it made the nation state a central player in the moral and political life of subject peoples. In an unparalleled manner, the state mediated the social contract between the rulers and the ruled and often represented the interests of the ruling class. Sovereignty, especially the sovereign quality of the European nation state, to put it more finely, also became a feature of Muslim political orders. The nation state exercised its sovereignty by controlling its territory via the application of the law on all subjects contained within its dominion. In a bid to elevate the European model of the nation state and its laws, colonial administrators as well as their post-colonial successors were almost compelled to render all indigenous laws and practices barbaric or to reduce them to local, folk or customary status. 'From the eighteenth century', notes the legal historian Peter Fitzpatrick (2001: 157), 'formerly acceptable civilisations mysteriously degenerated and became uncivilised'.

Hastings's displacement of Muslim norms of criminal justice in eighteenth-century Bengal not only transformed indigenous modes of justice, but made the state a stakeholder in prosecuting and avenging the murder of a legal subject. Such a right to claim justice was once exclusively the preserve of the family and nearest of kin to the deceased. Under the new legal dispensation, relatives of the deceased were rendered mere spectators to a juridical process. Colonial policies deemed Muslim practices that permitted the perpetrator of a homicide to give material compensation to the victim's kin in lieu of the death penalty to be an offence. By abolishing the Islamic concept of crime and punishment in the domain of criminal law, Fisch (1983: 54) observed, Hastings's new laws did away with 'all distinctions as to the value of human life' that Islamic law offered. The transplantation of a new criminal code was fastened to new ideas, notes Fisch, such as the European criminal philosophy 'that human life could not be measured but was a value beyond all comparison' (ibid.). Whereas Muslim law retained a spectrum of remedies for homicide, colonial laws legislated only the death penalty for homicide. Thus the implicit consequence of the colonial value of 'life' was its stark antithesis, namely 'death', or, on occasion, the deprivation of freedom through imprisonment. It remains moot whether colonial criminal laws advanced the humanitarian dimension of law or whether the policy to substitute the Islamic legal order was not merely an exercise in the demonstration of colonial sovereignty.

Gradually, in numerous colonial contexts, the status of Muslim law as part of an international legal system was downgraded from being a law of a civilisation to a status closer to customary law. It was also, therefore, not altogether surprising that, in contesting the nature of the secular polity in post-colonial Muslim countries, Islamists in the last quarter of the twentieth century made law the battleground of contestation and identity. Sovereignty was often the major point of contention: while the proponents of a secular polity claimed that sovereignty

was invested in the state via a constitution or parliament approved by the public (*demos*), their Islamist opponents argued that sovereignty was vested exclusively in God, and was made demonstrable by upholding the law of God – namely, the *shari'a*.

Recoding the law

Parallel to the increased role of the state in everyday life, the translation of key Muslim legal texts into European languages made knowledge of the law accessible to modern Muslim elites who lacked knowledge of these legal texts. While the democratisation of this previously specialised knowledge lessened the monopoly of the religious classes over the discourse of the law, it also had other unforeseen consequences. Among other things, it abstracted Muslim law from its canonical referents and contexts, with the result that it set into motion a process of reifying the law; it borrowed selectively from a complex and organic legal archive, and turned legal discourses into things and artefacts. In the new era, concepts like *shari'a*, Muslim family law practices such as marriage (*nikah*) and repudiation (*talaq*) or Islamically approved commercial practices and bans on usury (*riba*) were, as ideas and practices, staged more elaborately in order to become symbolic or truncated stand-ins, if not representations of an 'Islamic' moral world view.

Continuous legal transplants from English and French laws as well as the codification of Muslim laws only ensured the gradual move of Muslim law towards legal positivism, thus disconnecting law from its ethical and moral moorings. Subtly these processes inaugurated and generated new rationalities and new taxonomies of Islamic law, as ancient practices acquired new meanings in new contexts. The rediscovery of selected texts of Maliki jurisprudence produced in Muslim Spain, such as the publication of Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi's *al-Muwafaqat* (*The Conciliated*), ushered in a new rationale that made public interest (*maslaha*) a paramount legal goal and fulfilled the ends of the revealed law (*maqasid al-shari'a*), the primary philosophy of Islamic law (Opwis 2005: 201–2). In the Arab world in particular, law curricula such as those advanced by the Khedival Law School in Cairo or at secular universities invented a new taxonomy for Muslim law along the template of secular law, adding categories hitherto unknown to scholars of classical Muslim laws. The new legal taxonomy included categories now known as civil law, commercial law, private law, criminal law, the authority of written documents and elaborate laws of procedure.

The practice of *khul'*, a procedure whereby spouses separated by mutual agreement, was a good example of transculturation. Recall that, in classical Muslim law, adhered to by most traditional ulama, males have the exclusive power to repudiate a marriage tie. However, in order to lessen this unilateral male power, in medieval times Muslim jurists permitted a wife to negotiate a

no-fault exit from the marriage contract with her husband. The negotiation involved the return of the dower or nuptial gift (*mahr*) that the husband had provided to the wife upon inception of the marriage. She could also offer an additional sum of money to the husband in order to be released from the marital tie.

In modern times, the practice of *khulʿ* was given a completely new rationale. Many Muslim legal activists now view *khulʿ* as the female equivalent of the right to initiate divorce. This viewpoint replaced the old presumption of exclusive male power to dissolve the marriage contract with a new presumption where spouses to a marriage have equal power and rights. The modern incarnation of *khulʿa*, however, remained a bone of contention between different Muslim constituencies according to the legal ideology they adopted. Reform-minded modernisers favoured the transformation of the law to meet new social exigencies; traditionalists favoured changes to the extent that these were consistent with canonical authority. The fault line between these constituencies became visible when the Egyptian legislature in 2002 equated the *khulʿ* provisions to a female's right to a no-fault divorce (Arabi 2001; Muhammad 2003). Both religious traditionalists and feminists disapproved of the measure: for the former, the parliamentary act perverted the logic of provisions formulated in classical Muslim law, while the latter deemed the law insufficient from a perspective of women's rights (Shahine 2004).

The case of *khulʿ* in Egypt effectively demonstrated that, especially in modern contexts, as compared to earlier times, power politics was joined at the hip to law and invariably coloured juridical practice. With the emergence of larger social units, such as society, government and state, the latter often exercised an overriding interest over all other community interests. In doing so, the juggernaut of modern statecraft incorporated Muslim laws into an altogether different legal sociology and anthropology from its pre-colonial iterations.

Under the watch of a variety of colonial authorities from the English, French and Italians, a distinct category of law related to the Muslim family came into existence under the broad rubric of Muslim personal or family law, regulating marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance. Colonial authority also impacted on a related body of law regulating endowments (*waqf*), which managed religious and social trusts to support a range of public charitable and welfare functions. Historically, the activities of the trusts were not explicitly religious, but under colonial rule new notions of religion and religiosity were secreted into colonised societies. Over time, these trusts and endowments also gained a peculiar religious character in line with modern constructions of religion.

Many have questioned why secular colonial authorities retained Muslim family laws marked by a religious character while repealing other laws inflected by religion. Clearly, law itself was the site of contestation between the colonial

authorities and the colonised, concerning issues such as access to resources and labour or relationships of power and authority over interpretations of law and morality. Gail Minault (1998: 156) explained that colonial authorities marked some practices as peculiar to Muslims, in order to declare them as essentially Islamic. For this reason, an ensemble of legal discourses consistent with very Protestant notions of religion had to fit with the structure of the British colonial state in the sphere of the 'private'. The combined labours of the coloniser and the colonised over time produced 'a distinct body of law *within the context of the state*' with which Muslim men and women could readily identify (ibid.; emphasis added).

Examining late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Egyptian law reforms under colonial rule, anthropologist Talal Asad pointed out that colonial authorities attempted to forge notions of religion as a domain of the private via the practices and construction of the family. Asad (2003: 227–8) noted that the codification and restriction of the *shari'a* in colonial Egypt was in itself a 'secular formula for privatising "religion" and preparing the ground for the self-governing subject'. In their respective observations, Minault, and especially Asad, each reinforced the point that the modern nation state, beginning with the colonial state, utilised the law in order to construct a different kind of category in the law – namely, the family – in order to constitute a new subject, the 'private' subject. Through the family, the 'individual was physically and morally reproduced and had his or her primary formation as a "private" being' (Asad 2003: 227).

After a careful analysis of various reformist legal discourses, including the work of the famous Egyptian reformer Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh and a less well-known lawyer Ahmad Safwat in colonial Egypt, Asad (2003: 240) observed: 'If traditionally embodied conceptions of justice and unconsciously assimilated experience are no longer relevant to the maintenance of law's authority, then that authority will depend entirely on the force of the state expressed through its codes'. Here Asad underlined the transculturation of traditional notions of justice with state-centred ones as a product of colonialism.

Law's authority in pre-colonial societies derived from the harmony between experience and a subject's codes of justice. Coercion had very little role in inculcating authority. A result of the colonial interruption is that the discursivity of law – the effortless relation between experience and notions of justice – was disturbed and, as a consequence, fragmented. What defined the colonial moment of law according to Asad (2003: 240) was the state's 'power to make a strategic separation between law and morality . . . because it is this separation that enables the legal work of educating subjects into a new public morality'. Family law, backed by the coercive power of the state, became a 'law' proper and slowly drifted away from notions of morality, causing deleterious consequences for women and children in many contexts, especially in instances where family laws had been codified (Sonbol 1996).

The strategy of utilising the law to reorganise the moral sentiments of subjects was not only limited to colonial Egypt and India. In colonial Africa too, as Richard Roberts and Kristin Mann (1991: 3) observed, law played a vital role in the moral education and discipline of colonial subjects. Colonialism sought to impose a new moral order that in part synchronised with proposed political and economic orders that were founded on 'loyalty to metropolitan and colonial states and on discipline, order, and regularity in work, leisure, and bodily habits' (ibid.).

Scott Kugle (2001) showed how the process of the production of a colonial version of *shari'a* law in India was a contested one. Kugle documents the efforts of colonial authorities to recast and acculturate Islamic law into becoming Anglo-Muhammadan law. It was this hybrid of Muslim and English laws that became the site for the production of Islamic law in the social-contract theory mode. Coupled with elements of natural law in an Islamic key were the heightened debates about the objectives of the law and the salience of public interest (*maslaha*) in Muslim law (Abdul Hakim 1953: 27–65). While Kugle did recount the role of some Indians in the production of Anglo-Muhammadan law, the accent of his narrative placed the onus for the construction of Muslim laws on the colonial authorities. However, it was quite self-evident that the involvement of Indian Muslim elites, as well as elites in Egypt, Algeria and elsewhere, each served as a critical voice in making a new version of Muslim law within their specific contexts in collaboration with colonial authorities (Christelow 1985).

Elites also came in different ideological stripes and thus cannot be summarily reduced to a monolith, since a different kind of politics played out in each context, making it hard to generalise. In India and Egypt and elsewhere, modernised Muslim elites were caught on the horns of the dilemma: either to boycott the colonial system or actively to participate in it in order to remake their legal traditions. For practical reasons few could afford to be indifferent. Comparatively speaking, traditional Muslim elites among the ulama in Egypt often directly and consistently engaged in legal reform compared to the occasional reformist interventions of their counterparts in India. In Egypt, the names of Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh and his student, Rashid Rida, prominently come to mind.

'Abduh and Rida both energetically cast Muslim juridical philosophy into the mould of social contract theory framed within a specific Islamic natural-law model. They achieved this by reviving discourses of public interest and juridical public policy (*maqasid al-shari'a*) that had once been marginal, if not controversial, legal concepts among canonical Sunni juridical authorities. However, the encounter of a revised notion of Muslim legal theory with modern political realities canonised the juridical tradition of Egypt with an element of Islamic legitimacy. This took place by means of what Armando Salvatore described as engineering a public sphere in which the vocabulary of reform (*islah*), divine norm (*shari'a*) and governance/politics (*siyasa*) constituted the grammar of an

educational-civilising process (Salvatore 2001). In other regions, similar processes were at work but utilised different modalities and grammars of Islamic reform. Today, few people would question the rationale and validity of public policy (*maqasid*) and public-interest (*maslaha*) considerations and doctrines in the articulation of Muslim law, even though these very discourses were marginal to juridical debates in the past and had only gradually, if not grudgingly, attained mainstream approval. These doctrines were, however, instrumental in harmonising the traditional corpus of Muslim laws with the disciplinary and centralising nature of the modern state (ibid.: 138).

ʿAbduh's twentieth-century counterparts among the traditional ulama on the Indian subcontinent abjured the radical juridical moves his reformist brand of Islam advocated. The Indian ulama preferred to adopt the formal theories propounded by the orthodox schools of Sunni law. Only those modernised Indian elites whose sails became filled with the winds of a progressive Islamic jurisprudence and who engaged in official or state-centred juridical discourse on Islamic law in India, such as Ameer Ali and Asaf Fyzee among others, were inspired by legal developments in the Middle East.

On occasion, however, the Indian ulama intervened in the official juridical discourse. The occasion was when the foremost scholar affiliated to the Deoband seminary in pre-partition India, Mawlana Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi (d. 1943), and some of his colleagues borrowed a legal strategy from their Arab counterparts and adopted an eclectic approach (*talfiq*) to Islamic law, choosing the best law instead of unbendingly adhering to the interpretations of a single law school. They aspired to go beyond the canonical view of the Hanafi school, which was the dominant school of law on the subcontinent. Thanawi and his colleagues sought a way out for Muslim women to obtain a judicial annulment of their marriages should their spouses abandon them or become chronically derelict in providing them with financial support and maintenance. Under the strict rules governing marriage according to the Hanafi school, Indian Muslim women had very few grounds to annul a marriage. Many were forced to end their marriage by becoming apostates: under classical Muslim law, a change in religion rendered a marriage contract nugatory (Thanawi and Qasimi n.d.). In order to facilitate the juridical dissolution of marriages in India, Thanawi borrowed from the Maliki school, which had more flexible grounds for the dissolution of a marriage. With the input of the Indian ulama and Muslim members of the national legislature, a bill known as the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939 was introduced in order to amend the statute laws (Ahmad 1986: 78).

Figures such as ʿAbd al-Razzaq al-Sanhuri in Egypt and Asaf A. Fyzee in India might serve as two paradigmatic figures whose intellectual labours and practical applications translated classical Muslim laws into the form of modern positive law that functioned within a modern state (Hill 1987). Because they had to translate Muslim laws into Occidental models of the secular and the

nation state, they also had consciously to sacrifice certain aspects of it, such as exculpating the moral dimensions of Muslim law.

Commenting on the work of some modern Arab jurists, the legal historian Baber Johansen (1999: 59) wrote: 'The transformation of a sacred law into a code established by legislation changes its basic structures and sacrifices some of its important dimensions . . . In fact, the Arab authors of the codification period have . . . removed those dimensions of the *fiqh* which do not enter an occidental understanding of "law" from their legal discussion.' What the modern legislative process of codification sacrificed or what proponents of the reconstruction of Muslim law failed to address, Johansen worried, was the ethical content directed at the conscience of the individual, their *forum internum*, a dimension that was always part of historical Muslim law and ethics.

Johansen's comments would hold equally true for developments elsewhere in the Muslim world. One had only to look at the views of Asaf Fyzee in India. A Cambridge-educated lawyer and later an Indian civil servant, Fyzee framed Muslim law within the confines of a nation state. He was most explicit, compared to his Arab counterparts, in his undisguised articulation of radical theoretical presumptions. Muslim law, he stated, required reformulation in order for it to harmonise with the requirements of the secular nation state. In his realist approach to the law Fyzee was explicit: religion and religion-based morality belonged to the private sphere.

Fyzee (1981: 85) conceded that, in the earliest iterations of Islam, 'law is not distinct from religion' and the two streams of religion (*shari'a*) and law (*fiqh*) flow in a single channel and are indistinguishable. Yet, for all colonial and post-colonial Muslim polities the unity of religion and law was an insoluble dilemma or aporia and remains so to this day. In trying to address this problem, Fyzee pointed out that the term *shari'a* in essence reminded one of revelation. By contrast, the term law (*fiqh*) encompassed rational acts and prescribed legal acts. In another construction Fyzee interestingly described the *shari'a* as the moral law and called *fiqh* the civil law (ibid.: 57). Therefore, in his view, *shari'a* effectively belonged to the domain of ethics, and, by relating primarily to the holy, it remained subjective and private. Law, on the other hand, consisted of objective rules for outward social conduct (ibid.: 99). Fyzee in this respect pushed for the secular construction of Muslim law.[7]

Aware of this double meaning of *fiqh* as both law and morality or consciousness, Fyzee proposed an elegant solution. 'Hence, in order to secure obedience to the law,' noted Fyzee (1981: 32), 'Islamic jurisprudence creates two sanctions – a primary sanction and a secondary sanction. The primary sanction is the desire of the human conscience to win grace in the eyes of God; the secondary sanction is created by society, namely, the enforcement of legal commands by the state in the name of the king.' With this explanation Fyzee showed an awareness of the moral dimension of Muslim law. Fyzee pointed out the growing

incommensurability between the order of conscience and the order of politics in a modern centralising and disciplinary nation state such as India. In a pre-modern world the realm of conscience and politics shared a common cultural and moral universe with some continuity and coherence. This continuity dissolved with the advent of colonialism where political, economic and legal changes triggered a set of transitions resulting in a heterogeneous public sphere that created greater dissonance between the private and public. Morality remained informed by religious discourses, whereas politics entered into a ferment of secularism. Fyzee explicitly endorsed the narrative of secular politics and the changes it ushered in. Aware of the gravity implicit in his proposals, he spoke sagely: "if . . . some elements that we have regarded as part of the essence of Islam have to be modified, or given up altogether, then we have to face the consequences' (ibid.: 88).

He seemed convinced that it was necessary to 'separate logically the dogmas and doctrines of religion from the principles and the rules of law. . . . The essential faith of man is something different from the outward observance of rules; moral rules apply to the conscience, but legal rules can be enforced only by the state. . . . The inner life of the spirit, the 'Idea of the Holy', must be separated to some extent from the outward forms of social behaviour. The separation is not simple; it will even be considered un-Islamic. But the attempt at a rethinking of the *shari'a* can begin only with the acceptance of this principle' (ibid.: 99).

Fyzee's counterpart in Egypt was another lawyer, the aforementioned Ahmad Safwat, who also distinguished between public law and personal ethics and whose writings Talal Asad (2003: 205–56) has carefully analysed in the context of law in colonial Egypt. Compared to his Egyptian counterparts, Fyzee gave considerably more serious thought to the far-reaching social consequences and intellectual transformations he was proposing for the application of Muslim law under colonial and post-colonial regimes. Often Muslim reformers undertook legal revisionism by stealth. They were sensitive to a backlash from more orthodox ulama and even from laypersons if they were seen to support notions of change that were too radical. On other occasions reformers failed to theorise the implications of their reforms for the epistemology and ontology of the law, evading the more difficult questions concerning the consequences of their reforms. Most Muslim thinkers circumvented discussion of the legitimacy of the nation state, accepting it as a *de facto* state of affairs and clung to transnational constructions of the confessional community (*umma*) as more deserving of loyalty and commitment.

However, in pre-partition India some traditional ulama began thinking about how to legitimate the nation state within a Muslim juridical idiom. If Fyzee advocated a secular civil law, then at least one traditional scholar advocated a communitarian notion of *shari'a* governance. Abu-l-Mahasin Muhammad Sajjad (d. 1940), a traditionally trained religious scholar remembered for establishing a network of informal judicial tribunals for Islamic law in several states of

India, advocated the institutionalisation of '*shariʿa* governance' (*imarat-i sharʿiyya*) for Muslims. In his numerous writings Sajjad passionately argued that the loss of Muslim territorial power did not mean that Muslims were no longer obliged to follow *shariʿa* norms. In order to do so they had voluntarily to organise themselves in a form of *shariʿa*-based self-governance. Hence, there was also a need to elect *an 'amir of the shariʿa*' in every state of India to organise the moral life of the community. After Sajjad's petitions for constitutionally enshrined fundamental rights for Muslims had failed, he opted for informally regulated private rights for his religious group, without affecting the public character of the Indian state.

In this reconfiguration, the character of *shariʿa*, apart from a moral law, was also a bulwark against external interference as well as an instrument for the political mobilisation of Muslims. Here again *shariʿa* became part of the grammar of the emergent Muslim public sphere, as was the case in Egypt. Sajjad did not demand the application of Islamic criminal laws, despite the fact that he proclaimed the revival of the *shariʿa* and claimed it was a comprehensive and total normative order (*nizam*). Those who wilfully omitted adherence to the *shariʿa*, were, in words, returning to a state of pre-Islamic ignorance (*jahiliyya*). This kind of rhetoric differentiating Islam as an 'order' or 'system' against the morally unsettling state of *jahiliyya* as part of Sajjad's sociological analytic prefigured another grammar that would later be popularised by figures such as the Pakistani ideologue Abu-l-Aʿla Mawdudi and later the Egyptian ideologue Sayyid Qutb.

For Sajjad and many of his successors in the *shariʿa* governance movement, the organised and institutionalised practice of the *shariʿa* stood *in lieu* of the caliphate. In other words, the *shariʿa* was a symbolic empire with a crucial difference; now one pledged loyalty to a *normative (legal) empire*, not a territorial empire, as previously known. *Shariʿa* governance, as contemplated by Sajjad, was also a form of resistance to modernity. One must point out that modern legal systems were viewed as the final juridical and moral arbiters. Moral norms that were once located within communities, tribes or extensive kinship networks were replaced by juridical norms. By keeping certain domains of the law out of the grasp of state power, as Sajjad suggested, communities could reclaim a certain level of autonomy by exercising moral power over subjects. Today, the informal juridical tribunals established by Sajjad continue to flourish in a secular India while simultaneously also establishing indirect linkages with the formal legal system.

Conclusion

Muslim laws are palimpsests or genetic tissues that reveal the complexity of the colonial encounters as well as earlier social experiments. Far from simple one-way exchanges, both the colonial authorities and the colonised subjects

generated and innovated their own internal discourses to meet new contingencies. As Muslim peoples in different locales reconstructed their laws, they also altered inherited social imaginaries through interactions and processes of transculturation that brought about significant transformations: ones that legal historians can only begin to chart decades and centuries later.

While there was no symmetry in power between the coloniser and the colonised, it did not mean that the colonised did not have agency in determining some aspects of their moral and cultural life. In various contexts during the colonial period it became obvious that Muslims made interventions, resisted and were also co-partners in determining Muslim law. The asymmetry in power became most manifest in legal Orientalism – the way Muslim laws were imagined and studied, and on grounds of which policies and attitudes towards them were shaped. Legal Orientalism has an obdurate legacy and continues to cloud perceptions of entire Muslim societies and practices.

If there was one significant change that the colonial legacy made to the construction of Muslim laws, then it was to make the state an integral player in the making of modern Muslim laws. This was a significant shift, one to which scant attention has been paid and that many traditional practitioners of Muslim laws today resist. The traditional ulama preferred to sustain the presumptions of the pre-colonial imaginary of Muslim law, irrespective of the resultant anachronism.

Paradoxically, juridical discourse or moral philosophy was also the one domain in which coloniser and colonised found an elective affinity. From Rifaʿah Rafiʿ al-Tahtawi and Muhammad ʿAbduh in Egypt and Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi in Tunisia, to Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi in India, to mention a few examples, not all of them judged the European and later post-colonial juridical orders to be completely repulsive. While many a traditional Muslim scholar disagreed with the substance of colonial laws and resented the political philosophy that animated it, they did nevertheless find an elective affinity to the practice, ordered symmetry, procedures and positivist features of colonial laws. Part of this elective affinity was rooted in a shared legal positivism between Muslim and Western juridical traditions.

The colonial past as memory continues in the present in transnational networks on a global scale through mass migrations of Muslim populations to the West, especially in North America and Europe. This memory was also on occasion invoked to fuel the politics of dissent and violence. Acts of terror by a plethora of Muslim non-state actors invoked the memory of colonisation in order to counter Western neo-colonial wars and territorial occupation. In terms of Muslim law this past was thematised in petitions for the implementation of versions of the *shariʿa* in the form of Muslim Personal Law in the United Kingdom, Canada and South Africa. At the same time, Indian Muslims fiercely resisted attempts to dissolve Muslim family law in India, while, in several

northern Nigerian states and in the Sudan, *shariʿa*-based penal codes were enthusiastically implemented for some time. The ghosts of colonialism and its legacies of entanglement with Muslim laws nevertheless live on.

Summary of chapter

As overlapping categories, colonialism, globalisation and transnationalism shaped Islamic law, just as internally produced Muslim perceptions of norms, values, order, justice and truth marked the international order. As a normative system at the weaker end of an asymmetrical global geo-political and moral system, much of the transformation of Islamic law also occurs in the mirror of Euro-American knowledge traditions. Liberal capitalism remains a hegemonic discourse, as do secular democratic ideals producing subjectivities and forms of living that reflect those values. Muslim thinkers and societies often feel obliged to respond to these forms of life ambivalently, by both rejecting certain aspects and accepting others. Indeed, law and social norms are part of a complex cultural matrix, which in turn, is at the centre of social and political transformation. Cultural evolution accompanies certain changes in Muslim social imaginaries as well as foments mutations in the conceptions of the self and other (identity). Islamic law and Muslim ethical deliberations are virtually palimpsests with revealing testimony to such transformations in rich details. Instead of thinking of colonialism, globalisation and transnationalism as processes resembling a one-way street – whereby the dominant powers inform the dominated – this chapter presents the relationship of domination to be more complex and unpredictable. The colonised played as much a role in shaping their normative order as did the coloniser, despite the assymmetry of power between the two stakeholders.

In the colonial and post-colonial periods Muslim knowledge traditions became forcibly entangled with Euro-American knowledge traditions with greater intensity than previously documented and produced new hybridities. Certain colonised regions and countries gained greater influence and prominence compared to others and became models for other countries. In the post-colonial world of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Islamic law drew global attention. In the previously colonised states, there were vocal demands to reinscribe Islamic law into the normative identity of the emerging states. In some countries there were calls to take Islamic law beyond the purview of family law and elevate it as the symbol of state sovereignty with the full gamut of *shariʿa* based laws to be applied. The stated goal of such moves were always that Islamic law made for a superior value system and would lead to social salvation. Outside nation-state contexts where an Islamic reawakening became tangible Islamic law became a desirable norm and value-system in the private domain as integral to individual practices for salvation. Demands for the application or recognition of aspects of Islamic law are made by sizeable Muslim minority communities in parts of Europe and North America.

Questions

1. The colonial encounter entailed a clash between different conceptions of religion and normativity. What misperceptions of Islam does the author highlight?
2. The author distinguishes between *shariʿa*, Muslim laws and modern positive law. What is the relationship between these concepts, and how was one transformed into the other?

3. In what sense did the colonial encounter affect legal practice in Britain?
4. What were the processes colonial regimes sucessfully used in transforming Islamic law in the colonies?
5. How can one describe the agency of Muslim actors in their relations with colonial regimes and in the making of a new version of Islamic law?
6. Discuss the role of Islamic law in terms of Muslim conceptions of the moral life and its relationship to personal salvation.
7. What were the key elements of Fyzee's adaption of Islamic law to the requirements of the secular nation state?
8. Do you think Sajjad's communitarian conception of *shari'a* has any relevance for Muslims living in Europa? Why?

Notes

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1. The inspiration for this phrase as well as the form has been borrowed from A. J. Liebling ([1959] 1986).
2. The analytical keyword that looms large is: counterpoint. Although the term 'contrapuntal', meaning the counterpoint in classical music, was popularised by the Palestinian American thinker Edward W. Said (1994), it is indeed notable that some fifty years before Said it was already a powerful concept in the intellectual vocabulary of the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz ([1947] 1995). Counterpoint in Ortiz's lexicon demonstrated the play of illusion and power in the making and unmaking of cultural formations. Ortiz's insights derived from his Cuban context might be equally applicable to African, Asian and Near Eastern colonial settings in their respective encounters with imperialism. See the very helpful introduction by Fernando Coronil (1995).
3. See the works of Gerber (1999), Zubaida (2003) and Hallaq (2005). Zubaida gives some attention to the continuity of the law from the pre-modern to the modern, while most other historians of Islamic law pay attention only to the discontinuities of the law. For discussions about the writing of history and the difference between history and memory, see among others, de Certeau (1988: xxvi) and Chatterjee (2004: 12).
4. For a most illuminating study of how cultural domination works by consent, see Viswanathan ([1989] 1998).
5. For more on legal Orientalism, see Strawson (1993, 2001).
6. See the works by Fisch (1983), Cannon (1988), Blue, Bunton and Croizier (2002) and Rai (2004).
7. The interrelated nature of morality and law is further complicated by the fact that classical legal usage allowed for some slippage between *shari'a* and *fiqh* without any neat separation between the two. Furthermore, authorities like Abu Hanifa, one of the founders of the orthodox schools of Sunni law, and the jurist-theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, as well as the historian Ibn Khaldun, all conceded to a strong moral interpretation of law (*fiqh*). Moral discernment, they all agreed, was a kind of consciousness or intuitive perception (*ma'rifa*) acquired by an individual through knowledge and self-discipline in order to detect what is right and wrong.

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PART 3

Debating Modernity

CHAPTER 7

The Reform Project in the Emerging Public Spheres

Armando Salvatore

Introduction: The common good and the public sphere

The 'colonial encounter' with the West eroded the integrity of Muslim majority societies and political formations at various levels (see Chapter 6 in this volume). In a desire to overcome this state of weakness, leading scholars and personalities of the Muslim world claimed that Islamic traditions and institutions did not need to be discarded in order to make space for a modernisation path that would merely imitate Western models. Nobody could deny that the identification of the 'modern' with the 'Western' resulted from the very success of singularising Western modernity as a global civilisation destined to set the parameters for the social and political development of the Muslim majority world. In the context of a deepening confrontation, the potential of Islam as an autonomous civilising force within the modern colonial framework that Western powers dominated well into the twentieth century was not simply exposed to challenges at the political, military and economic levels. It also depended upon the imposition by the West of standards of cultured and 'civilised' behaviour oriented to worldly success and bestowed with a purportedly universal value.

A host of public personalities from within the Ottoman Empire and other parts of the Muslim world attempted to cope with the civilisational hegemony of the West and with what was perceived as the belated development of Muslim societies by instituting a programme of reform intended to revitalise key resources drawn from their scholarly, legal and philosophical traditions. They aimed to invest these resources into a counter-project of modernity that could bear a credible Islamic imprint, in spite of all evident trends of acculturation that accompanied the imbalanced power relationship with the colonial regimes. The Muslim reformers aspired to re*form*, re-energise and reconstruct Islamic traditions to the extent that they provided resources for advancing innovative action and supplying collective cohesion to the social body of Muslim societies, which they saw as severely affected by colonial policies. The reform programme was not a centralised undertaking but the result of a more amorphous movement linking personalities and scholars of the Muslim world under the banner of a common aspiration. Facilitated by new techniques of communication, foremost of which was the printing press, the reform programme took form in the context of the emergence of modern public spheres. A blueprint for reform

was envisaged that targeted not only the specialised personnel or elite of Islamic knowledge (*al-khassa*), but also the common practitioners and the general public (*al-ʿamma*). The relations between *al-khassa* and *al-ʿamma* and the necessity to address a mass public were integral to these reform ideas.

Since the early 1960s there has been a sustained reflection on the importance of the public sphere within modern Western societies. The public sphere was conceived of as a realm providing both cohesion and spaces of freedom to social actors alongside the two other spheres of economic production and state steering (Habermas [1962] 1989; Negt and Kluge [1972] 1993; Calhoun (ed.) 1992; Fraser 1997; Weintraub and Kumar (eds) 1997; Eisenstadt et al. 2000; Warner 2002). To match this reflection centred on an allegedly exclusive European trajectory, a growing body of literature has since the late 1990s focused on the public sphere as a key arena for reassessing the specific ways through which Islam, intended as an ensemble of traditions and institutions, is carving its space in the modern world (see Schulze [1994] 2000; Stauth (ed.) 1998; Eickelman and Anderson [1999] 2003; Salvatore (ed.) 2001; Hoexter et al. (eds) 2002; Burgat and Esposito (eds) 2003; Salvatore and Eickelman (eds) 2004; Salvatore and LeVine (eds) 2005).

Within this field of research, the most significant nexus linking Islamic traditions to modern societies is represented by the way in which traditional notions of the common good fit into the norms and apparatuses of a modern public sphere. The idea of the common good and the notion of the public sphere are related in complex and significant ways. Ideas and practices targeting the commoners and educating them to the pursuit of the common good often play a role within pre-modern cultural traditions; on the other hand, the public sphere is a key communicative space that supplies meaning and cohesion to modern, especially – but not exclusively – democratic societies. In the mainstream Habermasian account, this ideal function of the public sphere is prefigured in the history of emancipation of the bourgeoisie from the tutelage of the absolutist ruler, a process that was the legacy of the Enlightenment and of the European revolutions. In particular, the ideal-type of the emancipative role of the public sphere, as enunciated by Habermas, is based on the analysis of the period of European history that stretches from the French Revolution of 1789 to the revolutions that took place in several European countries in 1848–9 (Habermas [1962] 1989).

Within this approach to the emergence of modern Western public spheres, it becomes clear that the notion of the common good cannot be considered merely as a relic of an undifferentiated *ancien régime*, where the king was the good shepherd who took care of the well-being of his sheep. The concept of the public sphere envisions a site of discussion and deliberation among moral subjects, transcending their private interests through the dynamics of defining what is the common good of society as a whole. This articulation of the public sphere

is not confined to representative political systems; it is also formed in those social contexts that lack truly representative institutions. Not to be neglected, the build-up of bourgeois public spheres that prepared the pan-European revolutionary eruption of 1848–9 remained a crucial legacy for the political cultures of the societies involved, even if in most countries the revolution was aborted and authoritarian regimes were not subverted, but rather acquired a new populist colouring. Irrespective of the success or failure of movements seeking political transformations, the public sphere plays the role of a crucial socialising arena and communicative relay connecting actors within society not only among themselves but also to the domain of politics. The activities that animate the public sphere range from debates taking place within diverse sites such as coffee houses, literary salons, clubs and religious congregations to the publication of pamphlets and journals. Their immanent goal is to attain a consensual formulation of the common good, intended as a norm to be formulated by free citizens, and not by – however enlightened – despots. The redemption of society from authoritarian rule and from the arbitrary and non-rational character of the latter constitutes a potential political fall-out of the functioning of a public sphere.

The notions and practices associated with the pursuit of the common good and the functioning of the public sphere are intertwined in more complex ways than might appear if we were to contrast them as representing, respectively, a static traditional idea and a modern system for structuring communication within society (see Chapter 1 in this volume). Charles Taylor has added some interesting details to the Habermasian view of the public sphere as the specific site of a type of action (communicative action) that facilitates understanding among actors beyond structures of authority or particularistic interests. Taylor maintains that the rise of a modern public sphere expresses the quintessential capacity of modernity to valorise ordinary, common life. The outcome of the process is the formation of a common space accessible to all members of a given political community. They are free agents basing their actions on autonomously acquired interests and on values that are largely transparent to fellow citizens and therefore debatable. A key characteristic of a modern public sphere appears then to be the reflexive character of the communicative process. The agents are speakers who reflect not only on their own interests and values, but also on their own identity as potentially autonomous agents. On the one hand, they can discover through debate that they share basic values with other individuals; on the other hand, they develop a critical capacity that can find expression through a variety of media of communication (Taylor 1993, 2004).

To sum up, the notion of the public sphere rests on the idea of acting, arguing and deliberating in common in ways that are legitimated through a collective pursuit of the common good, which also implies a fair degree of transparency of communication among the actors involved in the process. If not aimed at

radically reconstructing society on abstract rational bases, the public sphere is nonetheless the arena where ideas of society and the social bond of justice and solidarity are discussed with the goal of reforming society.

In a revised approach to the public sphere, which challenges the alleged exclusivity of Western developmental patterns, lie buried some key layers of traditional notions of the common good. This should not be too surprising. Think of the idea of 'brotherhood' as articulating a traditional type of solidarity, often imbued with religious commitment, which was reshaped into 'fraternity', the last of the three values written on the banner raised by the French Revolution. According to this revised perspective, it becomes relevant to investigate how the Islamic notion of the common good (*maslaha*) was selectively appropriated by modern Muslim reformers and played out within colonial and post-colonial public spheres. I will show that the idea itself of a 'reform' (*islah*) conceived in Islamic terms was ideationally and even semantically close to the Islamic idea of the common good, on the one hand, while it was structurally linked to the changed modalities of communication and mobilisation in the emerging public spheres, on the other.

Emerging political formations within colonial modernity

In tension with the illustrated idea of the common good, a first major leitmotiv of political modernity (see Chapters 1 and 3 in this volume) appears to lie in the issue of differentiation between societal spheres, a process governed by the new forms of power and regulation deployed by the modern state. In the colonial era and in post-colonial settings, this process entailed not only the centralisation and monopolisation of the state's power on the territory on which it exercises sovereignty, but also, increasingly, the internalisation by the state subjects of the disciplines of the rational agent, usually identified with the *homo economicus* (Mitchell 1988, 2002). In a further step, these subjects reclaim more control on the political process and attempt to compensate the emerging dominance of economic rationales within social relations by mobilising the ties of affection and solidarity implied by the idea of a 'civil society' (Norton (ed.) 1995–6; Eickelman and Piscatori [1996] 2004; Salvatore and LeVine (eds) 2005). A second major leitmotiv of political modernity can thus be defined as the simultaneous differentiation and relinking of spheres of social action. The public sphere here represents the arena that gives expression and provides coherence to the aspirations of increasingly autonomous actors within civil society. It is also the key infrastructure that facilitates mediation between traditional notions of the common good and the imperatives of political modernity.

We should then be able to assess the extent to which non-Western configurations of political modernity, under the hegemony of the colonial West, might represent ways of deepening the earlier transformations (see Chapter 1 in this

volume) without fully conforming to – or adopting the conditional compromises with – the rationalities of optimisation of control, pursuit of wealth, centralisation of power and internalisation of discipline that became vectors of modern transformations. Such processes led in Western Europe to a divorce of the exercise of social and political power from its traditional normative bases, and so to a fully-fledged autonomisation of the power machinery of the modern state. Within modern Muslim majority societies, the outcome of the transformation has been varied and ambivalent.

The process of modern state-formation within the Islamic civilisational framework, even in the case of the Ottoman Empire, lacks, in comparison with European prototypes, a fully autonomous legitimation and a radical centralisation of power. Also missing are the institution of a strongly ideological nexus of this centralisation to a determination of individual rights framed in the context of that form of power (first of all, contractual autonomy) and a mechanism to protect and promote individual property like the one supported by the guarantees of the omnipotent 'Leviathan' represented by the modern state. While the most modern among the Muslim states, the Ottoman Empire, also strove towards deepening the centralisation of governmental power and was also able to add to its power by astutely managing centrifugal processes (Barkey 2008), it did not acquire the kind of ideologically pinpointed autonomy that the European state attained by appropriating and inverting some of the sacral features of the church (see Chapter 1 in this volume). The reappropriation of the title of Caliph by the Ottoman sultan in the late eighteenth century occurred in the context of a process of retreat, vis-à-vis the Russian Empire, and cannot be equated with an attempt to catch up with the formation of a fully-fledged Muslim Leviathan. More generally, in the Muslim majority world the process of endogenous state-formation was interrupted by colonial encroachments (as in India) or was negatively affected by quasi-colonial pressures (as in the Ottoman Empire and in Iran), which created new, complex conditions for the formation of colonial and post-colonial states.

We need not revisit here the broader issue of political modernity (see Chapter 3 in this volume); rather I provide an assessment of the reasons that induced various personalities affiliated with the broader Islamic reform programme to invest their best energies in a politics *of* the common good *within* the public sphere. This type of programme allowed them to bypass the ongoing strictures of political action and mobilisation that limited citizens' participation within most colonial and post-colonial formations as well as post-Ottoman Muslim majority polities. I will illustrate how this programme was articulated through a conceptual network finalised to reconciling the tradition of amalgamation of agents' interests incorporated in notions of the common good with modern norms of differentiation between societal spheres and with a principled autonomy of the modern social agent. In this sense, the politics of the common good retains an

essential ambivalence for being much more than a surrogate to mechanisms of political participation: it was the key to the formation of a largely autonomous arena, the public sphere, which proved suitable for discussing and disseminating ideas of moral cohesion of society.

In spite of the undeniable importance of the Indian subcontinent and of Iran in their confrontation with the imperial expansion of modern European powers, it was the Ottoman Empire to be on the front line of the longer, most direct and, finally, lethal confrontation with modern European hegemonic forces. This cultural hegemony owed as much to colonial enterprises as to the building of academic disciplines that had the non-Western world as their object. The study of the non-Western world was premised on the idea of a common humanity, but was articulated through the bias of a civilisational primacy of the West. The West saw itself as marching towards building a rational society, at the same time as it confronted the purported civilisational deficiency of the others, foremost, of its closest significant other, the Muslim world. In response to this situation, various voices within the reform movement perceived that the insufficient advancements of the Muslim world needed to be explained not by shortcomings of Islamic traditions or of the Islamic civilisation *per se*, but by corrupted interpretations of Islam's message and especially by decadent practices and even superstitions. According to several reformers, a vast array of detestable practices had caused the fading of once well-functioning institutions in key sectors of society such as education and the administration of law. Entertaining a dialogue with the innovating spirit of the most advanced works of Muslim scholars of pre-modern times, and in particular of the Late Middle Ages, was seen by several public personalities as a significant alley to the moral reform of Muslim populations, via the increase of the cultural resources needed to face the changes and challenges of the age. One major theme of the reform programme became the demarcation of a moral field for educating subjects to commit their energies to the resurgence of the *umma*. As formulated by Talal Asad (2003: 226), this theme was concerned with 'how the reordering of social life (a new moral landscape) presented certain priorities to Islamic discursive tradition – a reordering that included . . . a new distinction being drawn between law and morality, and new subjects being formed'.

Generations of reformers

Significant attempts to reconstruct viable Islamic traditions especially in the field of the law had already been carried forward by a host of variously motivated Muslim leaders during the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, prior to the rooting of a reform discourse with clear contours within the emerging public spheres of colonial states. The activities of these early modern personalities span across a variety of regions of the Muslim world, which were

variably affected by the Western colonial expansion. As illustrated by the movements and activities that were initiated and conducted with a variety of means – from intellectual to military – by Shah Waliullah in India (d. 1762), Muhammad b. ʿAbd-al-Wahhab (1703–92) in the Arabian Peninsula, Usuman dan Fodio (1754–1817) in territories corresponding to today's Nigeria, Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (1786–1831) in lands corresponding to today's Pakistan, Umar Tall (1794–1864) in West Africa, Muhammad b. ʿAli al-Sanusi (1787–1859) in Cyrenaica and ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri (1808–83) in Algeria and in Syria, some late medieval developments in the philosophy of law were recognised as a promising momentum in the chain of Islamic traditions. Most of these reformers *ante litteram* seemed to be equally interested in the conception of *maslaha* of Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi (d. 1388) and in the notion of a *siyasa shar'iyya* (a governance based on *shari'a*) of Ibn Taymiyya (1262–1328). They were thus setting the necessary conditions for a framework of reform selectively drawing from traditional resources but concretely implemented on a terrain of confrontation with modern colonial powers. The sufficient conditions for such a reform project were to emerge at a later stage, when the reform discourse became more structured via the intervention of personalities acting in a mature colonial framework and channelling their teachings with the aid of the media of modern public spheres, by addressing in particular educated audiences (Salvatore 2007). Urban reformers took over the task of reconstructing selected components of the Islamic traditions The dimension of such endeavours can be assimilated to a programme to ground, justify and develop an autochthonous type of modernity: an 'Islamic modernity'.

In the specific context of both the Ottoman Empire and its splinter adversary represented by the state building project of Muhammad ʿAli in Egypt (1769–1849), it is not surprising that the reform project was first articulated by personalities intimately linked to the process of administrative reform of the Ottoman and the Egyptian states. Only at a later stage, from the 1860s and 1870s, did a more autonomous class of reformers emerge, when the public arena of Egypt – a country that also attracted personalities from the Mashriq, an area that was still under the control of the Ottoman ruler – became the hub of the reform programme. It is noteworthy that the first editorials, which are considered a key genre in the emergence of a modern public sphere since they address a specific argument in a concise stile, appeared within the administrative bulletin *al-waqa'i' al-misriyya* and were authored in 1842 by the leading Egyptian scholar Rifaʿah Rafiʿ al-Tahtawi (1801–1873). Some of them dealt, quite unsurprisingly, with the relation between *siyasa* (government) and *shari'a* (Islamic normativity) (al-Kumi 1992: 67–85). The take-off of the Egyptian public sphere as a largely autonomous intellectual and communicative space centred on the printing press of newspapers and periodicals dates back to the 1870s and 1880s and unfolded in parallel with institutional reforms, putting the legal system under increasing state supervision. The emerging public sphere provided the communicative

stage for the formulation of normative claims affecting the 'redressing' (this is the core meaning of *islah*'s idea of 'reform') both of Muslim subjects and of the *umma* as a whole.

We should bear in mind that, by the time the reform discourse started to be formulated within the emerging public spheres by urban personalities, who were often both thinkers and activists – like Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), Ibrahim Şinasi (1826–1871), Ziya Pasha (1829–1880), Jamal-al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897), Namik Kemal (1840–1888), ʿAbdallah al-Nadim (1845–1896), Muhammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905), Qasim Amin (1865–1908) and Rashid Rida (1865–1935) – the Western diagnosis of the inherent deficiencies of Islamic cultural traditions was already gaining currency. One of its chief spokespersons was the French scholar Ernest Renan, who asserted the inherent superiority of Christian over Islamic culture while eliciting the response of al-Afghani, one of the most vocal Muslim reformers of the epoch. At stake was first and foremost the capacity of Islam's juridical, theological and philosophical traditions to justify the collective pursuit of the common good via adequate means of collective organisation: primarily in the form of a modern statehood, under the assumption that a modern state could not exist without adequate cultural institutions for educating its citizens, inculcating into them a normative sense of commitment to the common good and finally encouraging their attachment to the political community. Reformers were then faced with the task of constructing a shared cultural perspective and of promoting a self-sustaining political determination that was adequate to challenge their Western colonialist counterparts on their own terrain, while relying on key elements of strength preserved and revived within their own intellectual traditions and institutional legacies. This was, in a nutshell, the question of how best to relate culture to power by devising the right blend between the heritage of regional civilisations and cultural traditions, on the one hand, and the modern tools mainly – though not exclusively – associated with the contemporary West, on the other.

The infrastructure of the media and the norms that regulated discourse in the Egyptian public sphere were first determined in the course of the broader transformations of the nineteenth century that witnessed a transition from an autonomous project of state-building based on autarchy and conquest to a colonial regime functioning on the basis of a growing financial control of the country by the major European powers. These changes not only encompassed transformations in the administrative structure and coercive tools of the state, but also provoked a new kind of disjunction between state power and the intellectual arenas of public discourse. One of the reasons for the modernity of *islah* was that it recognised the functional competence of the state and a sort of division of labour between the political class in charge of the government of the land (given by birth and privilege, or recruited through a special career), on the one hand, and the intellectual class held responsible for formulating the tenets of an educational

project targeting the subjects of the state, on the other. Not surprisingly, this disjunction implied a calibrated, but not unconditioned loyalty of the reformers to political authority, which was valid as long as the rulers adequately drew on the educational and disciplining blueprint formulated by the public intellectuals. In this sense, as exemplified by ʿAbduh's career before and after the ʿUrabi revolt and the imposition of a British protectorate over Egypt in 1881–2, the public sphere was not mainly an arena of anti-colonial agitation, but rather a terrain of cultivation of capacities and dispositions, of an emergent national subjectivity matching the requirements of governance with the collective emancipation from poverty and backwardness. Worth mentioning is that the Islamic reform movement encompassed not only leading personalities like the predominantly scholarly figure of Muhammad ʿAbduh and the mainly populist character of ʿAbdallah al-Nadim, but also lower, socially intermediate layers, like a host of graduates of the new professional schools promoted by the government (Gasper 2001). The public sphere was nurtured by mushrooming clubhouses (with their performance halls, dining spaces, libraries and even museums), charity associations (which developed more traditional services), a printing press and a modern style of public education first addressed to the educated classes but soon to be extended to the 'masses', formerly identified as *al-ʿamma*.

For our purposes, it remains to evaluate more closely the relation between the key categories that the Muslim reformers drew from the Islamic traditions and reinvested into a modern project. This step also entails an appraisal of how the new infrastructural conditions of communication facilitated by the printing press influenced the normative dimension of public speech, such as the standards for addressing the public, while presupposing a certain moral engagement and disciplining relationship between the public intellectual and his audiences.

The conceptual articulation of the reform programme

The dilemmas faced by the reformers were inherently complex and the solutions contrived were partly contradictory. Of four major key categories within their discourse, the first to mention is the notion itself of *islah*, imperfectly translated as reform. Reformers dismissed several methods and institutions of Islamic traditions in the educational and legal fields, while they wanted to redress and make fit again (this is the closest meaning of *islah*) and not to reject the conceptual apparatus of these traditions. The process cannot be equated to a squeezing of Islamic traditions into modern institutions, by simply discarding what was considered unsuitable to the tasks of a modern state. Much more than that, the emerging state policies could gain coherence and legitimacy only in an epistemological terrain that the emergent public sphere, initially hegemonised by the Islamic reform discourse – also designated (Salvatore and Eickelman (eds) 2004) by the shorthand formula of 'public Islam – contributed to shape not less than

colonial policies and their conceptual apparatuses (Mitchell 1988; Gasper 2008). By their appeal to a tradition of reform within the broader Islamic tradition, the norms of a modern public sphere were understood by the reformers not as a challenge to the traditions of Islam, but as an apposite disciplining engine for the reproduction and renewal of their knowledge stocks and leadership ambitions (Salvatore 1997: 83–8).

Second in the ranking of categories appears the idea of *maslaha*, originating from the same root as *islah*, *s-l-h*, which denotes being and becoming good, in the sense conveying the full scale of positive values from uncorrupted to right, honest, virtuous and just (Masud [1977] 2000: 135). More specifically, the root meaning of *maslaha* is the 'cause or source of something good or beneficial' (Opwis 2005: 182). Scholarly discussions occurring between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries laid the foundation for the conceptual network gravitating around *maslaha*. The main theoretician of *maslaha* was the fourteenth-century Maliki scholar from al-Andalus, Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi. It was especially through the work of al-Shatibi that *maslaha* became a concept that was no longer to be confined to the toolkit of jurisprudence and legal theory, but was one capable of covering a theory of social action and interaction finalised to what we call the 'common good' (Salvatore 2007: 156–71). In both classic and modern legal theory, *maslaha* (or in its specification as *maslaha 'amma*) is strictly linked to the 'goals of the law' (*maqasid al-shari'a*), a concept that is still frequently invoked within the reform-oriented, simultaneously legal and intellectual approach that carries *maslaha* as its banner. We do not need here to look in detail at the different patterns of indebtedness of modern writers on *maslaha* to various classical authors of legal theory (see Opwis 2005). For our purposes it is more important to stress that a renewed emphasis on *maslaha* was intrinsic to the reform approach of leading scholars such as Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Earlier literature on the Islamic *islah* has highlighted the role of leading thinkers in their calling for an adaptation of the ulama's competencies to the new modern constellations, via a reformulation of *shari'a* (see Kerr 1966). We come here to the third main element of the reform discourse, concerning the place of *shari'a*. Michael Gasper (2001) has observed that, while Islamic reformers agreed that the *shari'a* was the principal source of Islamic reason, the increasingly press-based public sphere was the key to establishing some crucial conditions for the use of that reason. The reinterpreted, traditional notion of *maslaha* provided such an ideal condition for several reformers who had to reformulate *shari'a* and its role. It set the standards for addressing the public by presupposing a specific ethical connectedness between the writer and the public. This approach is exemplified in the release and publication of *fatwa*s by Rashid Rida, which had a clearly educational and political intent.

As far as it was used and implemented in the discourse of Muslim reformers,

shari'a should be intended as 'Islamic normativity' or 'Islamic normative reason' rather than 'Islamic law'. The reform programme's emerging view of *shari'a* had to match the need to bridge the gap between the traditionally revered divine norm and the law, intended as positive and issued from state sovereignty, and in this sense secular. Law was seen as a tool for regulating fields of social behaviour and for disciplining citizens, a view that religious reformers largely shared with state authorities. The dilemma consisted in how to redefine the relationship between a normativity derived from God's commandments and oriented to the common good represented by *maslaha*, and the institutional legality that was gradually taking root in new codes and the new courts and more generally in the institutional outlook of the colonial state. In the Egyptian case, the reform of the legal system was not considered detrimental to the normativity carried by the *shari'a*, which Muhammad 'Abduh and other reformers were attempting to reconstruct. The immanent rules and rewards of the emerging public sphere revolved around press organs representing a variety of political and intellectual currents and not immediately reflecting the views of state authorities (either indigenous or colonial). Such patterns regulated the tension between the abstract divine law that the reformers saw as imperfectly incorporated in the historic corpus of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), on the one hand, and positive state law originating from an increasingly distinct, modern process of legislation, on the other. The process itself of public communication diluted or delayed the perception of a possible gap.

In the context of such an emerging 'public Islam', *ijtihad* represents a fourth key category of the reform project. Traditionally, it was the faculty to endeavour to find original solutions to given legal issues. In the context of *islah*, it was understood by reformers as a largely supra-legal method for channelling the participation of Muslims in discussions of issues of common interest by fostering an autonomous capacity to propose solutions. Therefore it also became a tool to foster a moral discipline of the citizenry and to establish a new normative consensus in the public sphere. Rashid Rida ([1922] 1988: 115–16) went so far in the redefinition of *ijtihad* as to affirm that each Muslim should be a *mujtahid*, a practitioner of *ijtihad*. As Skovgaard-Petersen (1997: 65–79) has put it, for the Muslim reformers *ijtihad* was not merely permitted, but obligatory, thus constituting an essential part of the public personality of the Muslim subject to be reformed.

Rida inherited, updated and radicalised the project of the *islah* of Muhammad 'Abduh (mainly via their common project, the journal *al-Manar*) by putting an unprecedented emphasis on the centrality of the printing press within the reform project. He even claimed the genuinely Islamic character of the enhanced circulation of ideas facilitated by a modern press, which he praised as a formidable instrument for fulfilling the canonical injunction of 'commanding good and prohibiting evil' (*hisba*) and as a unique stimulator of *ijtihad* on a mass

basis. Essentially, the reformulation of *maslaha* by ʿAbduh and Rida consisted in its transfer from the realm of *ʿilm*, by definition monopolised by the ulama, to the field of *sihafa*, the press, as the axis of a reform-oriented public sphere (Hamzah 2009). By originally combining a focus on welfare with its public relevance (as well as, by reflex and necessity, with the public dimension of the new press media in use), *maslaha* ended up legitimising this renewed emphasis on *ijtihad*, in spite of the fact that this centrality was still questioned by several scholars belonging to the ulama ranks.

A public Islam?

For Muslim reformers, the new discourse of *shariʿa*, though focused on the building of a new moral subject, was not necessarily absorbed into a clear-cut moral field severed from the domain of state law. The way the tenets of *shariʿa* were communicated in the public arena caused its implosion into a normative kernel that could permanently feed back into the public educational process. This process can be profitably framed in terms of the emergence of a 'public Islam', to be understood as a dimension of public communication that also incorporates a disciplining programme for the benefit of the Muslim subject/citizen. As formulated by Talal Asad (2003: 225), while it is mistaken to assume 'that modernity introduced subjective interiority into Islam, something that was previously absent', the conceptual arsenal of reformers could build upon moral ideas of the responsible individual to institute norms for schooling and disciplining the modern citizen. Asad quotes the example of the public reformer Qasim Amin, who fought to enhance the role of women within Muslim society. According to Amin (2003: 235), 'it is allowed to the ruler who cares for public welfare to prohibit polygyny, conditionally or unconditionally, according to what he sees as suitable to public welfare'. Quite suitably, Asad's translation of *maslaha* as it is used at a mature stage of the reform discourse by a particularly radical reformer is no longer simply 'common good'. It becomes possible to override the permission of polygamy in the name of a generalised sense of 'public welfare' that can be framed in Islamic terms. Such terms still conform to the traditional nexus between the morality of individual conduct and the specific strength of enforceable law, now undoubtedly in the hands of the colonial, modernising state. Yet it should also be noted that individual responsibility is not framed in terms of the moral autonomy and irreducible freedom of the agent, contemplated by the Habermasian blueprint of the public sphere and more generally by the normative programmes of Western modernity. In contrast to this fundamental difference, the public Islam of the reformers resembles the European public spheres on a crucial level. In tension with the rationale of the modern state that affirms its sovereignty by severing the realm of state law from the domain of inwardness and morality, the logic of the emergence of the

public sphere in Western Europe was premised on the implementation of a collective will finalised to reinstitute a significant nexus between the previously separated domains of morality and law. In the process of modern state formation, the first autarchic phase was followed by a period of colonial encroachment and dependent development. During this period, the Egyptian public sphere was hegemonised by reformers. Though fragile and dependent – as a 'third sphere' of society – from the bureaucratic dimension of state formation and from the capitalist market, this public sphere provided a space of moral reasoning and, potentially, critique. In this space a reliance on the discursive and legal traditions of Islam was a possible and often effective option, in order to capture the attention and consensus of the growing strata of civil servants, the teachers and graduates of the new schools, along with older segments of the cultural elite. Reinstituting a nexus between morality and the law became an effective formula for gaining attentive audiences.

The public Islam that took shape in the colonial era reflects modern forms of institutionalisation of social governance ambivalently matched by reformed ideas drawn from Islamic traditions. These forms were supported by the print media through mechanisms of communication comparable with those conceptualised within Western social theory as the 'public sphere', a construct strictly related to the rise of the modern state. Yet reconceptualising Islamic normativity in terms that could fit the positive law of the modern state was like squaring the circle. It assumed the impossible acceptance of the modern state as the sole instance of a public and rational concern for the common good, and as the exclusive machine to implement it. Nonetheless, the main scope of the reform project was clear: reformers sought to retrieve and valorise those components of the Islamic tradition that affirmed the centrality of human reason and the acceptability of the law in ways that could be accessible to the common people (*al-ʿamma*). In this sense, the popularity among several reformers of the traditionally controversial notion of *maslaha* was not just due to the fact that this concept seemed suitable to facilitate a rational concern for the common good, but also because it promised a focus on the method for its efficient communication.

A partly different picture emerges from parallel developments in the core of the Ottoman Empire, until its collapse and the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Within such a trajectory, which was marked not by direct colonial rule but by an increasing pressure to conform to European parameters of state organisation and knowledge production, the shaping of public Islam assumes an even more ambivalent profile. As a first marker of difference from Egypt and other Arab parts of the Empire, it should be noted that most of the nineteenth-century reformers came out of the Ottoman bureau of translation and correspondence with European states. This feature created a higher level of interpenetration between administrative reforms and the intellectual reform project in the public sphere. Contrary to an enduring prejudice among

comparative political sociologists (see Nafissi 2006), the Ottoman state was not a mere reiteration of older patrimonial regimes, but managed to institute a distinctive balance between the otherwise rival ranks of the ulama (*'ilmiyye*) and the scribal class feeding into the state bureaucracy (*kalemiyye*). The Ottoman reform programme known under the banner of *tanzimat* was inaugurated in the 1830s and was framed in the sober, pragmatic and even positivistic language of the bureau of translation, which reflected a concern for the dissemination of meaning in vernacular forms while keeping principled neutrality on matters of religion administered by the ulama. Successive reform packages embraced the realm of education and the legal field (Mardin 2006: 124–34).

On the other hand, it is also possible to see the culture of Ottoman bureaucratic reformers as not completely neutral towards specific traditions, if we were to count *adab* (*edep* in Ottoman Turkish) as a parallel tradition inherited from the legacy of Persianate court culture and distinct from the Islamic tradition of the ulama. The most general definition of *adab* would be the ensemble of the ethical and practical norms of good life, ideally cultivated by a class of literati in the context of a court culture. As such it was a tradition central to Islamdom, intended as Islamic civilisation, more than to Islam, in the strictest meaning of a religious tradition (see Chapter 1 in this volume). The cultivation of this tradition became particularly strong in the Ottoman Empire at the passage to the modern era and provided the background culture to the scribal class, which, especially from the eighteenth century, assumed the profile and reflected the ambitions of an increasingly modern bureaucracy. If we count *adab* as integral to Islamic traditions intended in the widest sense of the word, we can detect a longer line of cultural continuity providing a background to the *tanzimat* reforms, before the shift to the synthesis performed by the sultan and caliph Abdulhamid II from the 1870s, which was more explicitly focused on Islamic slogans and motifs. The work of leading Ottoman reformers such as Namik Kemal and Ziya Pasha cannot be understood without placing their discourse in the framework of this parallel tradition, which allowed them to defend Islam as compatible with modern systems of government and organisation of society.

The theory of the 'circle of justice' that legitimised the authority of the sultan on the basis of a non-corporatist notion of the state, long before he rediscovered – during a crisis time in the late eighteenth century – the caliphal title, is a distinctive leitmotif of the *adab* literature, which did not clash with Islam, but configured a notion of 'Islamic justice' not primarily controlled by the ulama. The 'circle of justice' was not just finalised to legitimising power but was also the source of reflexive thought, as exemplified by the critical pamphlets published in earlier periods of crisis of the empire. At least since the eighteenth century the well-rooted culture of *adab* provided a formula for building moral subjectivities among the higher echelons of the bureaucracy, whose members often doubled their administrative competences with the cultivation of letters.

Based on the influence of this parallel tradition, in the trajectory of the longer nineteenth century within the centre of the Ottoman Empire, Islam was reconceived as a rational religion in probably stronger ways than religious reformers in Egypt and in the Mashriq were willing to do. In the trajectory of the late Ottoman Empire, which anticipates several developments of the Turkish Republic, the state appears as more than a mere machinery for the rationalisation of society. The radical reform approach of social engineering, popular among some Ottoman reformers, was also supported by an ethos and symbolic representation of the public good. In this public sphere, a recombination of the previously competing traditions of the *ʿilmiyye* and the *kalemiyye* produced an original public culture that provided the background to the mature reform project of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Neither was the recombination of the two traditions, *adab* and *sharīʿa* – civility and lawfulness – a unique development of the centre of the Ottoman Empire. In Egypt too the discourse of *islah* was framed in terms of a tension between the notions and rationalities incorporated within various Islamic traditions, and the modern norms and disciplines of a centralising state. ʿAbdallah al-Nadim, a committed Muslim reformer, was also one major disseminator of *adab*. This concept acquired a meaning close to 'civility', understood as an ensemble of moral dispositions embracing tact, good manners and mastery of the self as well as of social circumstances, and resting on the idea of 'social commerce' between Egyptians and foreigners. It also incorporated an ethic of respect for the sensibilities of the members of other autochthonous, but non-Muslim religious communities (Christians and Jews). Though still far from articulating a coherent notion of citizenship, *adab*, understood as shared civility and social commerce, was instrumental to the first attempts to articulate a modern, autonomous notion of 'society', intended as a collective body whose members are assigned functionally differentiated tasks (Farag 2001). The restraint from religious fervour that characterised the *adab* propagated by even a combative Muslim reformer like al-Nadim did not, however, diminish the emphasis on the centrality of religious norms. While in the first half of the nineteenth century al-Tahtawi could still be seen as a champion of the disciplining impetus of an autarchic yet modern state formation, al-Nadim was able to build up his role as a leading public educator by acknowledging the Western challenge, while developing a consciously antagonist stance based on a reforming public Islam. The bottom line is that it would be very difficult to prove that the emergence of public Islam was either purely functional or merely reactive to the process of social differentiation or nation-state formation.

The autonomisation of a modern field of morality tied up to the civilising process hegemonised by the West did not automatically undermine traditional disciplines and practices; it rather displaced the relative impact of the latter on the reformers' reconstruction of a Muslim self. It also enhanced the awareness

of the importance of situating the vital components of Islamic traditions within the emerging dynamic of the making of a nation state. The result was a tension – though not an irresolvable one – between being a Muslim subject and a member of the nation (at due time a 'citizen'). The 'invention of tradition' embedded in the public sphere of civility and *adab* superimposed the reformers' intervention upon still effective lines of tradition. This relation was also a process of 'translation', and therefore reflected relations of power (Asad 1993: 171–99), something of which the most acute and combative spirits among the reformers – such as al-Nadim – were well aware.

Conclusion

Against the background of the historic Western 'model' of modern transformations – which, far from following a smooth evolutionary path marked by a progressive rationalisation of social relations, economic behaviour and political organisation, was characterised by complex, contradictory and even antinomian tendencies – the idea of 'multiple modernities' has been proposed by authors such as Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Charles Taylor. This concept can facilitate the study of transformative trajectories in non-Western civilisational realms where the break with tradition is not so radical and where a stronger continuity of method and concepts is kept alive – both because of a different cultural logic and because the constraints to respond to Western hegemony made a recourse to tradition both popular and, within limits, useful.

Such an approach stressing conceptual reformulations more than radical breaks could be applied to the reformers' work on the classic notion of *maslaha*. A stress on change within longer lines of tradition might be seen as compatible with Habermas's approach to communicative action, if the latter is smoothed out of some theoretical angles and purified of excesses of abstraction. Along these lines, Muhammad Khalid Masud has defined the public sphere as a potential arena of social and political reform, which the modern media and mass education have helped to create, and where public debates on issues of common concern, based on updated views of *maslaha*, are taking place. Within such public spheres a plurality of voices is enacted, and a corresponding fragmentation – yet not exhaustion – of traditional authority takes place. For example, it is not only the ulama as experts of *shari'a*, but also lay members of the society who publicly discuss *shari'a*-related matters.

In such discussions, crucial questions are raised about the definition itself of *shari'a* and the role of traditional religious authorities vis-à-vis modern mechanisms of governance within the institutional framework of a modern state. Where a critique is formulated, it is often through a discourse invoking key tenets and authorised interpretations of Islam. While such challenges differ from a secularist critique in the Western sense – that is, one radically questioning

the legitimacy of religious tenets in public life – they are seldom dominated by a static religious orthodoxy either. The type of 'publicness' of the public Islam initiated by the reform discourse does not presuppose the type of secularity that was specific to West European experiences, nor the concomitant sharp deconstruction of the authority of tradition rooted in the church as an institution, as performed in particular by late Enlightenment thinkers (Masud 2005). There is a common basis of modern values, incarnate in culture and communication, which the public Islam of the reformers and of several other modern actors claiming Islamic credentials share with non-Islamic counterparts who are not radical secularists.

Within a horizon of 'multiple modernities', comparing the configurations of public spheres and the role of religiously inspired discourses and organised collective action therein might provide a more suitable terrain for assessing trajectories of political modernity than referring to the advancement of state formation and its degree of approximation to liberal-democratic models. Not to forget, secular power in its modern state form only gradually reached a certain stability in Western Europe in the course of the twentieth century and particularly after the Second World War and is therefore an unsuitable standard for a comparative investigation. Yet the issue of the nature of the state and of its sources of legitimacy vis-à-vis religion cannot be evaded. Contests in the various public spheres reflect the diversity, multiple articulation and internal contestability of civilisational legacies. They also affect concepts of state sovereignty, which even the most staunchly modernist among Muslim reformers have been reluctant to consider ethically superior to the differentiated patterns of allegiance entailed by Islam, like those linking local communities to the global *umma*.

On the basis of a redefined terrain of 'multiple modernities' and as part of the search for a proper dimension articulating an 'Islamic modernity' (or of various 'Islamic modernities') therein, reform programmes in the public sphere retain a particular importance not only for illustrating the practical conditions for the autonomy of self and the limitations to the open and rational character of public discourse but also for resonating with the post-independence developments of several Muslim majority societies. In other words, there are promising margins in the theoretical approach to the public sphere for accommodating both the 'public Islam' proposed by Muslim reformers and the more conflicted public entanglements of Islamic discourse in the conundrum of state and local politics found even in the often problematic post-colonial scenarios of the Muslim majority world.

It is against such a background where a specific complexity of the post-colonial Muslim world comes to sight that Masud (2005: 156–7) argues that the Western experience is not *per se* universally normative: synthetically put, 'societies whose political economies differ considerably from those of the West may practice communicative action and construct public reason differently

from the West'. The problem with the Western monopolisation of universalism and therefore also the danger of erecting a Western type of public sphere to an absolute standard of common rationality of social life, reside in the historical determinism and social evolutionism modelled on specifically, often parochially conceived Western historical trajectories. Muslim reformers are not innocent of this simplification, since they have often oscillated between an apologetic attitude (affirming that Islam is better than the West, and that indeed what is good in the West is taken from Islam) to a sell-out, blind attitude towards the resources of their own traditions, based on the belief that change in a direction dictated by the hegemonic parameters of Western modernity is inevitable and does not need painful cultural mediations. The consequence is that, by trusting the force of positive law in conjunction with authoritarian state interventions, too many reform attempts in post-colonial Muslim societies have not been premised on an adequate public discussion and attainment of consensus.

Summary of chapter

The notion of the public sphere rests on the idea of citizens acting, arguing and deliberating together within settings that presuppose that their aim is the ethical pursuit of the common good. Activity within such a sphere requires a fair degree of transparency of communication among the actors involved in the process.

The idea of the public sphere is at the same time culturally embedded and comparable across various civilisations. The way a sense of the public contributes to social life varies considerably, depending on the modalities of transaction over the definition of the common good, on shifting boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, on background notions of personality, responsibility and justice, but also on the degree of legitimacy of existing states and their capacity to control or repress autonomous public sphere dynamics.

Such an enlarged focus on the genesis of public spheres opens the door to a comparative look at various trajectories of their emergence within civilisations situated outside the Western core of modernity. There is a historical conjuncture that is particularly important for the study of Muslim public spheres. It relates to the period when a group of reformers from several parts of the Muslim world started to draw on the legacy of earlier scholars in order to institute a Muslim ethics of participation in the political community via new media of public communication, first of all newspapers and periodicals. The emergence of this prototype of a modern Muslim public sphere dates back to the late nineteenth century. Subsequent instances of such a public sphere still draw on that seminal experience.

The reform discourse in the public sphere contributed to creating a public ethic of citizenship by selectively drawing on key concepts belonging to Islamic traditions. Particularly important are five categories underlying the discourse of Muslim reformers and acquiring partly new meanings: *islah* (reform), *maslaha* (common good), *shari'a* (normativity), *ijtihad* (autonomous reasoning) and *adab* (civility).

The dynamic of the reform project in the emerging public spheres of Muslim societies supports the idea that one should look at a specific trajectory of emergence of a modern social and communicative space like the public sphere in a given

civilisational context, rather than measuring for the public sphere of a given country or set of countries the degree of its convergence towards or divergence from a purportedly universal model drawn from specific Western historic experiences. The analysis of the emergence of modern public spheres in an Islamic context benefits, therefore, from being framed in terms of the theoretical approach to multiple modernities.

Questions

1. What is the relationship between traditional concepts of the common good and the functioning of modern public spheres?
2. Is this relationship the same in the Muslim world as in the West, or is it different?
3. What was the specific strategy of Muslim reformers to formulate and, if allowed, implement their visions of the common good in the context of modern public spheres?
4. What was the relation between morality and critique therein?
5. What was the specific infrastructure enabling late Ottoman reformers (and their Egyptian counterparts) to develop and communicate their ideas?
6. To what extent was the intellectual reform programme related to the administrative reforms that were executed in the colonial and post-colonial states?
7. What was the place of the *shari'a* in the discourse of reformers and how did it relate to the concept of legal reform in the emerging nation states?
8. What does the author mean by 'public Islam'? Is this an inherently modern concept, or is such a public Islam thinkable in a pre-modern setting?

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CHAPTER 8

The Ulama and Contestations on Religious Authority

Muhammad Qasim Zaman

Introduction

Issues of religious authority are central to debates and contestations on varied facets of Islam in the modern world. How are the Islamic foundational texts – the Qur'an, the reported teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (hadith) and, in the case of the Shi'a, the teachings of the imams – to be interpreted? What qualifications are most suitable to interpreting these texts, as well as others widely recognised as sources and repositories of legal and ethical norms? What is the scope of legitimate interpretation when it comes to discerning the will of God from the texts He has made available to the people? How do the juridical methods, the exegetical discourses, and the theological doctrines of generations of earlier scholars impinge on, assist or impede renewed efforts to discern God's will and to put it into practice? What does it mean to put God's will into practice, and under whose guidance might this be attempted? What role does the state have in authorising religious discourses, shaping religious institutions and demarcating the sphere in which religious practices take place?

These questions of religious authority are not necessarily peculiar to the Islamic tradition, though it is with reference to Islam that I will consider some of them in this chapter. Nor, indeed, are they unique to modern and contemporary Islam. Such issues had arisen, and been extensively, if inconclusively, debated long before the massive political, economic and intellectual transformations that Muslim societies have undergone since the nineteenth century. The authority of the Muslim religious scholars, the ulama, was scarcely uncontested before the emergence of the college and university educated 'new religious intellectuals' (cf. Crews 2006: 27, 92–142).[1] Conversely, the ulama's claims to authority have not ceased either to be put forth or, in particular contexts, to be influential, even in the face of serious challenges from a host of rivals. The contexts in which they have articulated and defended their authority *are* radically different from anything seen in earlier times, however, and so, therefore, are some of the ways in which claims to authority are put forth as well as the ambiguities that attend upon them. Before we explore the significance of these changed contexts, it is worth briefly considering some facets of the long history of debate and contestation on questions of religious authority.

Sites of contestation in Medieval Islam

Religious scholars specialising in the study of the Qur'an and the reported teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, in Islamic law (*fiqh*) and legal theory (*usul al-fiqh*), in theology (*kalam*), and in the linguistic sciences necessary for these and other intellectual pursuits have existed in Muslim societies since the early ninth century CE (Crone and Hinds 1986; Zaman 1997). Contestations on religious authority long pre-dated the emergence of the ulama, however, for they were intertwined with political controversies that had come to engulf the first generations of Islam. Disputes about who had the right to succeed the Prophet Muhammad as the head of the community he had founded, whether he had, in fact, designated a successor and what sort of authority the successor (whether designated by the Prophet or chosen by the community) ought to enjoy have divided Muslims ever since his death in 632. Those who later came to be known as the Shi'a held that Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, 'Ali (d. 661), had been designated as his successor by Muhammad himself, to be succeeded by 'Ali's own descendants, all endowed with a religious authority second only to that of the Prophet. Those who emerged as the Sunnis disputed any such designation, and preferred to think of the community itself as the locus of religious authority. But who ought to guide the religious life of the community was itself a matter of uncertainty; and even when the ulama had begun to lay claim to that function, not all rulers were convinced by, or willing to defer to, their claims.

Sunni constitutional theory, articulated in its 'classical' formulations by the ulama, conceives of the caliph as the political head of the Muslim community. The caliph is expected to be able to participate in the deliberations of the jurists and is, ideally, equipped with sufficient juridical acumen to do so (cf. al-Juwayni 1401 AH: 84–8; Zaman 1997: 103–6). The caliph works in close collaboration with the ulama, guaranteeing the political and social climate in which the scholars, with some of his own input, help keep the community on the righteous path. This juristic vision is idyllic, not only because most caliphs did not, in fact, have the training or the knowledge of the jurists or – by the time this theory came to be formally articulated in the eleventh century – the coercive power necessary to function as effective rulers, but also because it concealed considerable tensions between the caliphs and the ulama in the first centuries of Islam.

The tensions had been at their severest early in the history of the ulama, when the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 813–33) explicitly challenged their claims to provide authoritative religious guidance to the community and claimed that prerogative for himself; but, even after that contest had ended in the vindication of the ulama's standpoint, and the rulers had come to assume the role of providing patronage to the ulama and of upholding 'orthodox' doctrines, the ulama were seldom insensitive to the danger too close an association with the ruling elite might pose. This had to do not only with misgivings about the lifestyles of

the ruling elite and their questionable practices, but also with potentially compromising the independence of the ulama's sphere of operation, the autonomy of their scholarly tradition. It was against this danger that the vehemently guarded authority of the Sunni schools of law (*madhhab*) may, for instance, have been intended to provide some protection. The school of law stood for a particular legal tradition, comprising doctrines agreed upon among generations of jurists and interpretative methods honed over many centuries, but it was also a 'corporate' entity resisting, to the extent possible, any effort by the state to define or influence the legal doctrine of the school (Jackson 1996). The doctrine of *taqlid* – which means not 'blind imitation', as many Western scholars of an earlier generation as well as Muslim modernists have often dubbed it, but adherence to the authority of established doctrines within one's school of law – was itself a defence against capricious interpretations (Wali Allah 1385 AH: 14), including, perhaps, those attempted on the bidding of the governing elite. The ulama competed with the rulers, not only on the site of the *shari'a*, however, which they regarded as their own preserve, but also on matters of public policy lacking any explicit basis in *shari'a* norms. The effort here was to provide some sort of a broad religious legitimacy even to otherwise unsavoury matters of statecraft as long as they did not flagrantly contravene the norms of the *shari'a* and, indeed, as long as the ruler could broadly be imagined as being guided in his conduct and public policies by the norms of the *shari'a* (Vogel 2000; see also Johansen 1999: 216–17).

The tense but symbiotic relationship between the rulers and the ulama was but one, if itself highly variegated, site on which questions of religious authority found expression. No less contentious were debates about the *sort* of knowledge on which claims to religious authority might properly rest. It was common for scholars to straddle many disciplines and practices – for example, as a jurist but also a theologian, a philosopher and, not least, a mystic. Yet expertise in multiple areas – or even the common-sense recognition that it is the opinion of an expert in a particular area that mattered most on questions pertaining specifically to that area – did not preclude strong claims to *exclusive* religious authority on the basis of particular forms of scholarly learning. Jurists of the Hanafi school of Sunni law did not think, for instance, that the objections Muslim theologians and even scholars of hadith might pose to their juridical methods amounted to much or even that the views of the theologians merited consideration in reaching scholarly consensus (*ijma'*) – a fundamental source of legal norms in Sunni Islam – on any given matter. As al-Sarakhsi (d. 1096), a leading Central Asian jurist, had caustically put it:

> The opinions of those who are theologians but do not know the sources and the methodology of the law and the way in which reference is made to scriptural proofs in the establishing of the norms do not count in the consensus . . . Likewise the opinion of those who transmit reports from the Prophet but do not have any

> insight in the aspects of the formation of independent judgment and the standards of judgment are not taken into account as far as the consensus is concerned. Because such a person is like someone belonging to the vulgar people as far as the legal norm is concerned and one does not take into account the opinion of the vulgar people when it comes to the consensus of the scholars of the time because such a person has no guidance as far as the norm is concerned whose cognition is required. He is like a madman so that one does not take into account his contradiction. (al-Sarakhsi 1973, vol. 1: 312; quoted, with minor changes, from Johansen 1999: 32)

Like the jurists, scholars of hadith were deeply conscious of the need to preserve the integrity of the methods they had developed over many generations and not to allow what they saw as amateurish imitations of their craft. Some early scholars of hadith had a notoriously low opinion of those narrating historical reports (*akhbar*) about the Prophet, his military campaigns, and the events of early Islamic history, for their alleged laxity in evaluating the authenticity of particular reports (Landau-Tasseron 1990). Scholars of hadith insisted, for instance, that reports attributed to Muhammad were credible only if the people transmitting them were themselves trustworthy and the chain of transmission (*isnad*) extended without interruption from the Prophet to the person narrating the report at any given time. Simply to narrate hadith on the basis of their edifying content and without a reliable chain of transmission that linked the narrators to one another and all the way back to its source, the Prophet, was not merely amateurish; it was tantamount to lying about the Prophet, with all the dire warnings of damnation that he was said to have addressed to those who did so. But, even after the methods of the hadith scholars had come to be adopted by the exegetes and the historians, there were other challengers. There was little the *muhaddithun*, the hadith scholars, could do about preachers who narrated hadith-reports and entertaining stories about Muhammad, as well as about the biblical prophets, to large and eager audiences but without the sort of methodological rigour that would vouch for the authenticity of the materials in question (Berkey 2001: 70–96). Storytellers and preachers had their audiences to satisfy; and they believed, no doubt in good conscience, that many an edifying hadith-report, and the impact it could have in fostering pious attitudes among the people, would be lost if subjected to the sorts of tests the scholars of hadith demanded. Some defenders of the popular preachers also felt that the hadith scholars' standards for vouching for a report's authenticity were unnecessarily restrictive: that there is no reason why the Prophet's appearance in, say, one's dream to authenticate a report attributed to him ought to carry any less authority than a formal chain of transmission (Berkey 2001: 74–87). None of this was acceptable to more exacting scholars, however. As the Hanbali scholar Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1200) put it, the popular preachers 'address themselves to the common people, who are like beasts, and who cannot criticise what they say.

They recite and say: "The scholar has said"; but the common people consider a scholar anyone who climbs the pulpit' (Ibn al-Jawzi 1971: 108; quoted from Berkey 2001: 72).

That the parameters of valid religious knowledge extended far beyond what the jurists and the scholars of hadith claimed to have in their possession was a view scarcely limited to popular preachers, of course. Among others, the Sufis and the Muslim philosophers concurred on this point, and both went on to question the sort of authority the ulama typically claimed for themselves. Sufism represents an extremely rich and complex facet of the Islamic tradition, but central to it is the assertion that the apprehension of the truth, with its transformative effects, is not reducible to scholarly learning and that most people, even among the scholars, are anything but privy to the secrets that God shares only with his 'friends'. The philosophers argued, for their part, that reason – and their methods of reasoning – enabled them to arrive at metaphysical truths independently of any religious tradition. Not a few among the philosophers were what Patricia Crone has characterised as 'educated laymen' – 'secretaries, doctors, astrologers, copyists, and other professionals . . . [who] owed their wealth and status to secular know-how rather than mastery of the religious tradition (though they were usually well-schooled in that tradition too)' (Crone 2006: 23). Emerging in the tenth century, such professionals – Muslim, Jewish, Christian – were often far more eager to share in a cosmopolitan culture transcending particular religious traditions and their structures of authority than they were in conforming to or defending those traditions (Crone 2006: 24). But there were those among the philosophers who sought *also* to demonstrate the concordance between philosophical and religious expressions of the truth, even as they lamented the ulama's failure to see any such concordance.

In his philosophical tale *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185) recounts how a child, growing up alone on an uninhabited island, is able to discover metaphysical truths through his own unaided intellect (Ibn Tufayl 1972).[2] Hayy, the protagonist of this story, does not take long to learn the language of the community inhabiting a neighbouring island, when he finally encounters a person who has abandoned that community after long having been part of it. He also learns that the religious beliefs of the person from this neighbouring island are, actually, identical to what he has already discovered for himself, a fact that reinforces them both in their shared convictions. But when the two make their way back to the city to teach people how to behold truths without the veil of images, metaphors and externalities, Hayy quickly discovers his limits even in communicating with the most gifted, albeit non-philosophical, minds. As he sees it, people's commitment to the externalities of the law clouds their judgement, and this realisation ultimately forces Hayy to abandon the city and return to the uninhabited island. The moral of this story can be understood in more than one way. For example, it might be

seen as the failure of what the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre calls a 'linguistic community', in this instance, that of the philosophers, to make itself intelligible to members of another linguistic community, each of which has 'its own body of canonical texts, its own exemplary images, and its own tradition of elaborating concepts in terms of these' (MacIntyre 1987: 392). But the story is also a searing indictment of the narrow horizons of the ulama, their utter failure to grasp the truth in any but the most superficial dimensions. Many ulama, for their part, saw the philosophers as little better than unbelievers: a charge that philosophers such as Ibn Tufayl's slightly younger contemporary, Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), vigorously contested (Averroes 2001).

Yet even when guided by the conviction that philosophy and religion were ultimately in accord, the claims to authority put forth on their basis seldom lived up to the promise of this concord – and this when the philosopher himself happened, as in the case of Ibn Rushd, to be a celebrated jurist. Taking the influential jurist, theologian and Sufi al-Ghazali (d. 1111) as his principal target, Ibn Rushd made it clear that the philosophical methods of demonstrative reasoning were superior to the poetical and the rhetorical modes of discourse, and that the fault lay, not with the practitioners of the demonstrative methods but rather with those who blurred the necessary boundaries between these different forms of reasoning (Averroes 2001: 21–2). As Ibn Rushd saw it, Ghazali lacked adequate commitment to any particular linguistic community: 'he adhered to no single doctrine in his books. Rather with the Ashʿarites he was an Ashʿarite [theologian], with the Sufis a Sufi, and with the philosophers a philosopher . . .' (Averroes 2001: 22).[3] Nor did he limit particular modes of discourse only to those suited for them. Ghazali may well have had worthy intentions – namely, 'to thereby increase the ranks of the people of knowledge'. Yet, Ibn Rushd had no doubt that Ghazali had done more harm than good (Averroes 2001: 21), not only by leading ordinary believers astray but also by bringing philosophy itself in disrepute. He recommended that the Muslim rulers 'ban those of [Ghazali's] . . . books that contain [interpretative] knowledge from all but those adept in it, just as it is obligatory upon them to ban demonstrative books from those not adept in them' (Averroes 2001: 22).

New challenges

The foregoing examples scarcely suffice to illustrate the scope of contestation on religious authority in medieval Islam. But, even in their inadequacy, they allow us to see that the ulama's claims to give authoritative expression to Islamic norms were never unchallenged, just as there has long been contestation on the fundamental questions of precisely what constitutes religious knowledge or who might properly lay claim to it. The challenge storytellers and popular preachers posed to 'professional' scholars of hadith has some parallels with the

ways in which the new religious intellectuals – products not of madrasas but of Westernised colleges and universities, often with no formal grounding in the Islamic sciences – interpret the foundational texts in conscious opposition to the ulama, and expound on all matters Islamic for their own readers and listeners. Ibn Tufayl's thinly veiled critique of the ulama would resonate with that of the Muslim modernists. The very different intellectual and cultural formations that often result in the incommensurability, and thus the unintelligibility, of competing religious discourses in the Muslim public sphere already finds an evocation in the travails of Hayy ibn Yaqzan.

Conversely, Ibn Rushd's criticism of al-Ghazali for his 'intellectual promiscuity' (Moosa 2005: 38) and for introducing unqualified people to views and methods that they had no business dabbling in prefigures some of the reasons for the modern ulama's discomfort with the Muslim modernists. Like their medieval forebears, moreover, the ulama of modern Islam have continued in their misgivings about the encroachment of the state on what they regard as their religious sphere. Here, even, an Islamist state represents a severe threat to the ulama, not only because the Islamist activists and new religious intellectuals typically have only a very tenuous link with the ulama's scholarly tradition, but also because the aspiration to regulate all aspects of life in accordance with an Islamist vision leaves little room for the ulama's own (or any other, rival) tradition (Zaman 2002: 99–108).

Yet, for all this, the magnitude of the challenges the ulama have faced to their authority in the modern world is unprecedented. Even when the medieval ruling elite had originated in lands geographically and culturally distant from those they governed, it was through a formal commitment to Islam – and the patronage of the ulama and their institutions that this entailed – that they typically claimed their legitimacy. In this as in other respects, the advent of European colonial rule marked a major break with earlier patterns. It was not only that the rulers were now non-Muslim rather than, at least nominally, Muslim, though even this fact posed new difficulties. The administration of Islamic law itself came to be jeopardised with colonial rule. In India, for instance, new judicial institutions began to be established on a British model from the late eighteenth century, and, though Islamic and Hindu law was retained in matters of personal status (notably marriage, divorce and inheritance), it was by judges trained not in the *shari'a* but in English common law that it was implemented. Muslim and Hindu legal experts were initially attached to the courts to advise the judges on religious law, but even this ceased to be the case not long after the consolidation of British rule in India in the mid-nineteenth century. Nothing was more central to Islam, as the ulama understood it, than the practice of Islamic law; and the advent of colonial rule had severely imperilled it.

Colonial rule did not, by any means, mark the end of the ulama's legal and educational institutions, as we will observe in the next section of this chapter. On

the contrary, at least in some cases, these institutions expanded in their numbers and activities in response to the new challenges facing the Muslim community. But, as Nathan Brown (1997) has argued with reference to nineteenth-century Egypt, even when these institutions continued to exist, the links amongst them, which had once been integral to their functioning in society and to the articulation and implementation of the *shari'a* through them, came to be severed. The longstanding relationship between the discourses of the jurisconsult (*mufti*) and the administration of justice largely ceased to exist in any significant sense, for instance, and the Muslim jurists' own discourses now came to evolve in much greater isolation from judicial practice than was usually the case in medieval Muslim societies. Institutions of Islamic learning (madrasas) continued to exist, and new ones were established: a madrasa founded at Deoband, in northern India, in 1867 soon came to represent a particular doctrinal orientation within South Asian Sunni Islam, with an emphasis on the need to 'reform' Muslim practices in terms of a renewed commitment to the study of the Islamic foundational texts and Hanafi law. Thousands of other, 'Deobandi', madrasas were established throughout India and beyond on the model of this parent madrasa. Other rival orientations within Sunni Islam had their own madrasas as, indeed, did the Shi'a (Zaman 2002). And yet, even such burgeoning madrasas could do little to re-enact the organic ties that had once characterized the educational, scholarly, juridical and social practices of many a Muslim society. Rather, the ulama saw them – as they still do, for instance in India and Pakistan – not as the characteristic feature of an urban landscape but as the last bastions of a beleaguered Islam.

The challenges to the ulama's authority often came not from *direct* colonial interventions in Muslim life – which British colonial rulers, in particular, often sought to keep to a minimum – but rather from the forces set in motion by colonial rule. Institutions of modern education, established by the government or by private initiative, began producing a Muslim intelligentsia whose members often explicitly challenged the ulama's claims to interpretative authority. From the late nineteenth century, Islamic foundational texts and other religious writings began to be available in print as never before, often in vernacular translations, further undermining the ulama's claims to privileged access to them. The effects of mass higher education and of print, electronic and other information technologies continue to shape all facets of Islam in ways that were simply inconceivable in a manuscript culture. The sort of challenge the popular preachers of Ibn al-Jawzi's day, or other challengers elsewhere, had represented to the scholars is dwarfed by the 'fragmentation of authority' in modern Islam, with its modernist, Islamist and other new religious intellectuals competing with each other and with the ulama for influence and authority in the public sphere (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996). This fragmentation of authority is often accompanied by what Eickelman and Piscatori have characterized as the 'objectification' of religion,

with Islam becoming – especially, but not only, at the hands of the new intellectuals – a set of reified doctrines and principles abstracted from the foundational texts and ready to be 'functionalised' in any particular context (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996: 37–45; on functionalisation of religion, see Starrett 1998). This objectified Islam is a very different construct from the discursive tradition of the ulama, whose relevance to the modern world or its authority it often explicitly contests.

These processes of social and religious change have continued in post-colonial Muslim societies, in which they have been accompanied and reinforced in more recent decades by an ever-accelerating globalisation. The world of medieval Islam was, in many ways, remarkably cosmopolitan: the North African traveller Ibn Battuta (d. 1368) was a most unusual figure in having visited lands that are 'equivalent to about 44 modern countries' (Dunn 1986: 3, 12 n.), but the sorts of scholarly and other networks he relied on during these travels, and the language of scholarly discourse he shared with the ulama everywhere, were long characteristic of the medieval Muslim world. For instance, over the course of several centuries preceding the advent of colonial rule, scholars, merchants and many others travelled from Iran to India, not only to flee political uncertainty at home, but also in search of the rich opportunities a career in India offered to many of them. The Hadramis likewise formed a network that was sustained not only by memories of a common origin – in Hadramawt in the Yemen – but also by commercial interests and, above all, by their scholarly credentials. As merchants, Sufis and scholars of hadith, they were not only linked to one another across geographical distances and across generations; they also helped connect local Muslim communities throughout the Indian Ocean, from the Malay–Indonesian archipelago to East Africa, and received rich patronage from local rulers for the ability to do so (Ho 2002, 2004). Yet, as important as medieval cosmopolitans like the Hadramis were to the circulation of ideas, to bringing facets of the Islamic scholarly tradition to local cultures and to linking these cultures to the greater Muslim world, medieval cosmopolitanism bears only a faint resemblance to the relentless and transformative flow of information, technologies and capital in the modern world. It is not only against the unprecedented power of the modern state or against rival intellectuals that traditional loci of authority have had to compete, though that competition continues unabated. As many ulama increasingly recognise, the global flow of ideas also poses severe challenges to their view of Islam and to the religious authority inexorably tied to that view.

Articulations of authority – old and new

Observers of contemporary Islam have often viewed the ulama as mired in an unchanging tradition that precludes any serious or sophisticated understanding

of the modern world on their part, and prevents them from playing any significant role in their societies other than striving fruitlessly to mitigate their increasing marginalisation. The sorts of challenges the ulama have faced since the nineteenth century, as reviewed in the previous section, might be taken to lend some support to such views, which were especially popular during the heyday of the modernisation and the secularisation theories in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and other movements of religious revival in non-Muslim societies have done much to encourage scholarly re-evaluations of earlier theories about the 'decline' or the 'privatisation' of religion (Casanova 1994), and a new interest in the sort of people leading movements of religious 'revival'. In predominantly Sunni societies, such interest has largely been focused on the college- and university-educated Islamists, rather than the ulama, however. And earlier views of the irretrievably marginalised position of the traditionally educated religious scholars have often been slow in making way for more nuanced interpretations.

There is no denying, of course, that, in many cases, the Sunni ulama and their institutions have undergone striking decline, even virtual extinction (cf. Eickelman 1985). A remarkable illustration of the decline of the ulama's scholarly tradition is provided, for instance, by the history of the Farangi Mahall family of scholars in the Indian subcontinent.[4] Ulama belonging to this family were at the forefront of Islamic scholarship in South Asia since the eighteenth century; and the Dars-i Nizami, the curriculum followed in South Asian madrasas to this day, still bears the name of Mulla Nizam al-din of Farangi Mahall (d. 1748), who had helped standardise it. Muhammad ʿAbd al-Hayy Laknawi (d. 1886), one of the most prolific scholars of the nineteenth century and the author of wide-ranging works on hadith and law, an important biographical dictionary of the Hanafi ulama, and numerous commentaries and glosses on texts widely used in South Asian madrasas, was also a member of this distinguished family. There were indications, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that pointed to a serious grappling with the challenges of modernity on the part of this family of scholars. The concern of Mawlana ʿAbd al-Bari (d. 1926) – the head of the family in the early twentieth century and a prominent political leader of his time – to work alongside Muslims educated in modern, Westernised institutions of learning (cf. Robinson 2001: 171) or his apparent openness to changes in the curriculum of the madrasa run by the Farangi Mahall scholars in Lucknow, in northern India, pointed in that direction. Equally impressive was the recognition of the need for flexibility and adaptation to change in the juridical writings of ʿAbd al-Hayy Laknawi. Yet, as Francis Robinson has shown, far from the promise of rethinking Islam in conditions of modernity being realised, the scholarly tradition of the Farangi Mahall itself withered away over the course of the twentieth century. Ironically for a family with so rich a history, the madrasa that ʿAbd al-Bari had founded in Lucknow in 1905 lasted only until 1969, and its

orientation towards modern learning was much more short-lived than its own existence. More strikingly, and already from the first quarter of the twentieth century, 'members of the family [themselves] began to turn away from Islamic pursuits and to seek their fortune in the Western and secular world raised up under British rule. By the 1940s and 1950s all were being educated after a Western fashion' (Robinson 2001: 128).

Yet, alongside such instances, there are others where the Sunni ulama and their institutions have shown remarkable resilience. Around the time that the Farangi Mahall madrasa founded by Mawlana ʿAbd al-Bari in Lucknow was closing its doors in 1969, there were almost 9,000 madrasas that belonged to the Deobandi doctrinal orientation throughout South Asia (Metcalf 1982: 136; Robinson 2001: 37). According to one estimate, in Pakistan alone there were nearly 10,000 madrasas in 2002, of which around 7,000 belonged to the Deobandi orientation (Rahman 2004: 79, 190–1). Part of the decline of the Farangi Mahall family of scholars may have been because of their dependence on the patronage of the Indian Muslim princes and other notables, which largely dried up in post-colonial India. By contrast, the ulama of Deoband, and Deobandi madrasas in general, have usually depended on financial contributions by ordinary Muslims (Metcalf 1982), and this has proved to be a more secure source of funding in times of political uncertainty and change. Farangi Mahall scholars were closely tied, moreover, to the shrines of Sufi saints, in and around Lucknow but also elsewhere; and family networks had always been crucial to the dissemination of their influence (Robinson 2001: 114–20, 171). This contrasts markedly with the *disembeddedness* – to adapt a term from sociologist Anthony Giddens (1990) – of the Deobandi scholars, their ability to adapt their 'reformist' orientation, anchored in the Islamic foundational texts, to varied contexts.

The intellectual activity of the ulama offers further indications that they have not fared poorly in conditions of modernity. Even as mass education and modern technologies have done much to undermine privileged access to religious texts, the ulama, too, have dexterously utilised the opportunities print and other technologies have made available to all. One of the most characteristic modes of discourse in the culture of the ulama in medieval Islam was the commentary – not only on foundational texts such as the Qur'an or classical collections of hadith, but also on other works seen as constitutive of the scholarly tradition, including other commentaries. The technology of print has made such works available to broader audiences than they had ever had. But it is worth noting that this technology has, not infrequently, also helped to introduce them afresh or, in particular cases, for the *first* time, in the ulama's own circles, creating possibilities for important shifts in emphasis and orientation in their discourses.

In the manuscript age, it was easy for particular works simply to fall out of circulation. In part, no doubt, in cognisance of this, some jurists required that a

mufti's *responsa* ought to be based only on works that were in fact widely available (cf. Ibn al-Humam 1970, vol. 7: 256). This meant that works on which earlier jurists might have relied extensively could no longer be used if they were deemed insufficiently accessible at a particular time or place; it also meant that, for all his mobility and cosmopolitanism, a scholar who might have had access to a text in one locale would not be able to invoke it in another, where it might not be widely available. Mahmud b. Ahmad al-Bukhari (d. 1219), a Central Asian jurist of the Hanafi school of law, had noted, in the Preface to his *Muhit al-burhani*, that the legal writings of his ancestors were all in circulation, that they were relied upon by judges and muftis and that he had compiled his own compendium of Hanafi law in order to join their scholarly company (al-Bukhari 2003: vol. 1, pp. 22–3). Ironically, however, the *Muhit* itself fell out of circulation, and some scholars – notably the Egyptian Hanafi jurist Ibn Nujaym (d. 1563) – disallowed *fatwas* with reference to it (Ibn Nujaym 1998: 291). In his biographical dictionary of Hanafi scholars, ʿAbd al-Hayy Laknawi, the aforementioned Farangi Mahall scholar, notes that, like some others before him, he had assumed the disallowing of *fatwas* on the basis of the *Muhit* to have been a function of the book's poor quality. But, having chanced upon a copy of the manuscript, he found it to be a generally sound work. He writes:

> It then became clear to me, that [Ibn Nujaym's] interdiction of *fatwa*s on its basis had to do, not with the intrinsic qualities of this work or [the credentials] of its author, but only with the fact that the book had become inaccessible. This is a matter that varies from one age or region to another. Many a book is extinct in one place but available in another, hard to find at one time and plentiful at another. . . . Consequently, if a work [like the *Muhit*] is found to be in wide circulation at a particular time or place, the [earlier] ruling [concerning its inadmissibility in *fatwa*s] is revoked . . . (Laknawi 1973: 206)

Although the *Muhit* itself did not become available in print more than a century after the death of ʿAbd al-Hayy, his comment may nonetheless be taken to reflect the dawn of an age when the technology of print as well as new means of travel and communication had, in fact, begun to make long-forgotten works available afresh to scholars.

Even as older commentaries are printed, notably in South Asia, Iran and the Arab Middle East, at least some among the ulama have also continued to produce their own, new commentaries. Major commentaries on hadith have been written, notably, but not only, by Deobandi scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and published both in South Asia and the Arab Middle East. One of the most ambitious of such works is the twenty-one volume *Iʿla al-sunan* by Zafar Ahmad ʿUthmani (d. 1974), which seeks to elucidate hadith reports deemed specifically to have a legal content and to do so in a way that shows, against the claims of sectarian rivals, the conformity of the Hanafi school

of law to these hadith-reports (ʿUthmani 1415 AH). ʿUthmani had embarked on the *Iʿla al-sunan* on the bidding of his mentor, Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi (d. 1943; on Thanawi, see Zaman 2008; Masud, Chapter 9 this volume), by far the most influential Deobandi scholar and Sufi of the twentieth century. Thanawi had also initially overseen work on the *Ahkam al-Qur'an*, a major exposition of the Qur'an's legal materials completed by ʿUthmani in collaboration with some other ulama a few decades after Thanawi's death (ʿUthmani et al. 1987). Unlike the writings of some leading Deobandi scholars of the twentieth century, commentaries are not a characteristic mode of discourse among, say, the Saudi ulama. But there are exceptions. ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Bin Baz (d. 1999), the president of the Saudi Board of Senior Ulama and the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia at the time of his death, was a scholar of hadith, and many editions of Ibn Hajar's (d. 1449) famous commentary on al-Bukhari's hadith collection often carry the imprimatur of Bin Baz's authorisation of its contents (Ibn Hajar 2000). Muhammad b. Salih al-ʿUthaymin (d. 2000), Bin Baz's colleague on the Board of Senior Ulama and an influential Saudi mufti, was, for his part, much given to continuing the long tradition of memorising particular theological and juridical texts. Besides the Qur'an, he had his students memorise the *Alfiyya* of Ibn Malik (d. 1274), *al-ʿAqida al-wasitiyya* of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), the *Bulugh al-maram* of Ibn Hajar (d. 1449), the *Zad al-mustaqniʿ* of Sharaf al-din Musa b. Ahmad al-Hujawi al-Maqdisi (d. 1560), the *Kitab al-tawhid* of Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhab (d. 1792) and several other works (al-Husayn 2002: 72–4). But even he produced an elaborate commentary of his own, on the aforementioned work of Hanbali substantive law, the *Zad al-mustaqniʿ*. The commentary was compiled and published posthumously in ten volumes (al-ʿUthaymin 1994–2005). It is worth noting that the passage from orality to writing was accomplished in this instance through the mediation of the audiocassette, on which his lectures on the *Zad al-mustaqniʿ* had initially been preserved (al-Husayn 2002: 105–12).

Islamist ideologues like Abu-l-Aʿla Mawdudi (d. 1979) and Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) of Egypt have produced their own influential exegetical works. But, just as they have competed with the ulama in doing so, the latter have, like the Islamists and the modernists, also engaged in producing works for a more general, lay audience, and print and other technologies have enabled them to do so. Thanawi himself had published a new translation of the Qur'an in the Urdu language, which was intended specifically for ordinary Muslims (Thanawi 1978). As printed, the lower portion of any given page of this work is devoted to a commentary on the verses translated in the upper portion of the page; but the commentary itself is kept to a minimum, and it is only the generally agreed-upon interpretations rather than the numerous *disagreements* among the earlier exegetes that Thanawi wanted to introduce to his non-specialised audiences, now with the imprimatur of his own authority. Thanawi is also the author of the *Bihishti zewar*, a manual of 'good behaviour' that he wrote specifically for the

guidance of Muslim women and that has enjoyed very considerable popularity in South Asia since its publication. To take another example, Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (d. 1976), a disciple of Thanawi and the founder of a major Deobandi madrasa in Karachi, Pakistan, had collaborated with Zafar Ahmad 'Uthmani on the aforementioned *Ahkam al-Qur'an*. But, apart from numerous other works, he is also the author of a commentary on the Qur'an in the Urdu language, which had originated in a long-running radio programme in which he regularly offered an explication of Qur'anic verses. The Saudi scholar al-'Uthaymin also answered juridical and religious questions on a radio programme; and his discourses on medieval theological and juridical texts were not only preserved on audiocassette and subsequently transcribed and published, but have often been widely disseminated through audiocassette itself (al-Husayn 2002: 32, 154–64; on his radio programme, see ibid.: 69). These examples can be multiplied. But they should suffice to indicate that – even as they empower many others hitherto largely excluded from the articulation of religious discourses – modern technologies do not necessarily diminish the influence of the ulama. They have enabled them to continue producing works for a specialised audience, and to do so specifically with a transnational audience of fellow scholars in view; but they have also made it possible for them to compete with the new intellectuals in addressing larger audiences of ordinary believers.

Modern education likewise creates new opportunities for the ulama, and this in at least two ways. For one thing, new audiences have emerged with mass higher education, not just for the new religious intellectuals – themselves the products of such education – but also for the ulama. As noted, the latter, too, increasingly address themselves to ordinary believers. And, while the authority the ulama claim for themselves derives primarily from their grounding in the Islamic scholarly tradition, it has also come to be based on an ability to address people educated in modern institutions and to do so in an idiom they would find familiar and persuasive. Secondly, increasing numbers of the ulama have themselves begun to acquire some sort of modern education. For instance, in March 2005, Pakistan's minister for religious affairs claimed that 'more than 4,700 [madrasas] . . . were already imparting modern education alongside religious education' (*Dawn*, 13 March 2005), by which he presumably meant that this was the number of madrasas that included the public-school curriculum in some form. In Egypt, the wide-ranging reforms of al-Azhar – the most prestigious seat of Islamic learning in the Sunni Muslim world – undertaken by the government in 1961, led to the establishment of several new faculties for the teaching of the modern sciences. As Malika Zeghal has demonstrated in her detailed study of al-Azhar and the transformations it has undergone in recent decades, their increasing exposure to the modern sciences has not necessarily marginalised the ulama. Instead, this has often fostered a new ability among the graduates of al-Azhar to forge closer ties than had hitherto been possible with the Islamists,

themselves the products of modern, Westernised institutions of education, and it is this ability that has contributed substantially to the new prominence of the ulama in Egyptian society and politics since the 1980s (Zeghal 1996).

A striking illustration of the possibilities modern education has created for the ulama, *even when* they have partaken of it rather minimally, is provided by the career of Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926), an Egyptian religious scholar who has lived in Qatar since the early 1960s. Al-Qaradawi's formative years at al-Azhar were completed before the thoroughgoing government reforms of 1961, though he received his Ph.D. from this institution about a decade after these reforms had been put into effect. Al-Qaradawi writes and speaks fully mindful of his credentials as an Azhar-trained religious scholar, but his audience is much broader than fellow ulama. Apart from the latter, it self-consciously encompasses the new religious activists and intellectuals, of both a modernist and an Islamist orientation, as well as other products of mass higher education. He has disseminated his views not just in print but also through satellite television and on the Internet; and he has played leading roles in several international associations, including the European Council of Fatwa and Research and the International Union for Muslim Scholars (*al-Ittihad al-ʿalami li-ʿulamaʾ al-muslimin*). He is, as Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen (2004) has put it, a 'global mufti' and, arguably, the most prominent of the contemporary ulama in Sunni Islam.

Al-Qaradawi's considerable appeal, for many in the Arab Middle East but also among those living in Western societies, has many overlapping bases. He has repeatedly invoked the vague but resonant idea of 'moderation', asserting that the 'moderate school' to which he claims to belong combines 'reason with the transmitted tradition, religion and the world, the ordinances of the *shariʿa* and the needs of the age' (al-Qaradawi 1996: 87). It represents, to him, a toleration of disagreement, a disavowal of religious and political extremism, and a refusal uncritically to submit as much to Western cultural and intellectual norms as to the juristic prescriptions of a bygone age. Some of his appeal also rests on the aspiration to address the legal problems faced by many Muslims in contemporary, especially Western, societies in ways that go well beyond (and sometimes explicitly break with) the sorts of options available in the existing juristic tradition. Nor is the effort to alleviate the incommensurability between the traditionally educated religious scholars and the products of modern educational institutions, or between the Islamists and the modernists, lacking in resonance with many in his audience. A discourse laced with such concerns promises accommodation to rapid processes of change, and to life in unfamiliar locales, but also the preservation of a sense of authenticity and of religious identity. Mass higher education and modern technologies – both characteristic of the audiences to whom al-Qaradawi addresses himself – become, not a liability for ulama like him, but a crucial basis of the authority they have come to claim for themselves.

The ambiguities of authority

I have argued so far that challenges to the religious authority of the ulama are not peculiar to modern and contemporary Islam, but that the scale and severity of these challenges in conditions of modernity are unparalleled in the earlier history of Islam. It should also be clear from the foregoing that the modern ulama have often responded to these challenges in ways that have ensured not only the survival of their tradition but, at least in some important instances, a considerable extension of their influence and their authority. Among the ulama who have successfully sought to preserve or extend their authority – and not all have been able to do so – there are important differences, however. These have to do, *inter alia*, with doctrinal orientations, the impact of colonial rule on particular Muslim societies, the ways in which the post-colonial state has been able to regulate religious institutions and practices, the degree to which the ulama have acquired modern forms of education, the ties that the ulama have forged with other religious intellectuals, and so on. All this makes for variation not only among ulama of different Muslim societies or, say, the ulama of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as compared to their contemporary successors, but also within the ranks of the ulama belonging to any particular Muslim society.

Articulations of religious authority mirror this variation. What sets Yusuf al-Qaradawi apart from many Deobandi ulama in South Asia is, for instance, much more than his dexterous use of satellite television and the Internet or an unmatched ability to address those with a modern education. Also at issue is the *approach* to the Islamic foundational texts and the legal norms derived from them. Where the Deobandi ulama affirm the authority of their Hanafi school of law as the framework within which the application but also the further evolution of the law ought to take place, al-Qaradawi's 'Salafi' approach takes the Qur'an and the Sunna, not the established doctrine of any school, as the fundamental yardsticks for the evaluation of legal norms.[5] To him – and here he differs from the more stringent Salafis themselves – the schools of law are, indeed, rich storehouses of sophisticated juridical thought rather than a mere obstruction to a direct encounter with the foundational texts. But they ought to carry no binding authority; such authority belongs only to the foundational texts, and it should be possible even for ordinary Muslims to override the doctrines of the school of law in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunna. For all their differences and, indeed, their animosity towards each other, the modernists and the Islamists share this approach to the foundational texts with each other as well as with Salafi ulama like al-Qaradawi. And some of al-Qaradawi's effort to find a language in which to address both the modernists and the Islamists, and the appeal of this effort, is surely predicated on this important affinity. It is this affinity that also underlies al-Qaradawi's desire to see the ranks of the ulama expand, not

merely in the sense of seeing larger numbers of traditionally educated religious scholars in Muslim societies but also in the sense of broadening the definition of who counts as 'ulama'. The definition al-Qaradawi offered in inaugurating the International Union for Muslim Scholars is telling in this respect. By the 'ulama' is meant, he said, 'the graduates of *shari'a* faculties and departments of Islamic studies, as well as everyone who has a [serious] interest in the *shari'a* sciences and Islamic culture and is active and productive as a scholar' (al-Qaradawi 2004, vol. 2: 991). This blurring of boundaries is a far cry from how, for all the accommodations they have made to the changes around them, Deobandi ulama would typically flaunt their madrasa-based scholarly credentials.

Yet even al-Qaradawi's discourses are not without considerable equivocation on questions of religious authority. For all his calls for expanding the ranks of the ulama, for transcending the unnecessarily rigid boundaries of the medieval schools of law, and for fostering legal approaches responsive to new needs, al-Qaradawi (1996: 198) is highly critical of 'those who call for renovation and development, seeking [thereby] to change Islam itself to accord with their own whims'. Such people think of Islamic substantive law (*fiqh*), he says, merely as expressing a

> point of view, [that is,] as representing the opinion of a particular individual in a particular milieu at a particular time, so that when the time changes . . . it becomes incumbent to create new laws. . . . While this is indeed the case so far as the particulars of a jurist's *ijtihad* are concerned, it is not so as regards the totality of the law. The latter represents the vast juristic riches in whose creation and development towering Muslim intellects have participated . . . (al-Qaradawi 1996: 198–9)

By this, al-Qaradawi seems to mean simply that the juristic heritage ought systematically to guide contemporary legal thought and practice, and that it cannot be either dismissed – as many modernists, Islamists and Salafis sometimes do – or invoked in incoherent and self-serving ways. The problem, of course, is that al-Qaradawi's invocation of the juristic tradition is itself no less self-serving. The schools of law have long served to ensure that legal resources are used in a methodologically consistent and responsible manner (cf. Abou El Fadl 2001: 47), though often at the cost of considerable resistance to adopting what might seem to be better solutions offered by a rival school.[6] But the effort to move past the boundaries of the schools removes that defence and leaves no better mechanism in place than vague arguments about whether particular legal norms do or do not conform to the foundational texts or to considerations of the common good (*maslaha*). In his important work on the legal thought of the Egyptian reformer Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) and his Syrian disciple Muhammad Rashid Rida (d. 1935), Malcolm Kerr has noted Rida's insistence on the adaptability of the *shari'a* but also his concurrent denunciation of many

of those who sought to adapt *shari'a* norms to changing needs in ways that Rida himself seemed elsewhere to recommend (Kerr 1966: 203–8). A similar contradiction between arguing for the *shari'a*'s relevance to changing times and viewing *other people*'s demonstrations of that relevance as undermining the authority of timeless *shari'a* norms clearly plagues al-Qaradawi's thought as well (Zaman 2004b). This is where his apparent recognition of the fragmentation of authority – with 'everyone who has a [serious] interest in the *shari'a* sciences and Islamic culture and is active and productive as a scholar' being counted among the ulama – stands in marked tension with his misgivings about those who allegedly think of Islamic substantive law as expressing mere 'points of view' from a bygone age.

A similar tension is discernible in responses (*fatwa*s) by the aforementioned Muhammad b. Salih al-'Uthaymin to questions regarding knowledge, religious education and religious authority (al-'Uthaymin 1996). Like other Salafi ulama, al-'Uthaymin insists on the continuing necessity of *ijtihad*; and, unlike most Deobandis, he does not believe that the qualifications for it are lacking, or even rare, in modern times. One is, moreover, no more tied to the doctrines of the schools of law than one is to earlier interpretations of the Qur'an, and al-'Uthaymin's recommendation to those seeking an understanding of the Qur'an is to interpret it on their own and only *then* to compare their personal understanding with those to be found in the major commentaries (ibid.: 141–3). The point here is not so much that medieval texts are without use – though Salafis like al-'Uthaymin are ambivalent about the consonance of a good deal of the scholarly tradition with 'sound', that is, Salafi, belief – but rather that the essential yardsticks for right belief are only the Qur'an and the normative example of the Prophet, and these are accessible to all. The logic of this position requires, furthermore, that the ulama themselves be dispensable. Reading a text with a religious scholar is a more *efficient* way of studying, for it can help save time and the effort involved in understanding difficult matters, but independent reading is not necessarily a flawed reading: if a text itself is reliable, its reading, even without a guide, is likely to be so as well (ibid.: 156; see also ibid.: 136). Such views seem to allow strikingly little privilege to the ulama and their interpretative authority, and the ulama of the past and of the present seem to stand on the same plane in this respect.

Yet, al-'Uthaymin also provides many illustrations of his discomfort with the very fragmentation of authority he seems otherwise to endorse. As one of those seeking a *fatwa* from him observes, the contemporary Islamic resurgence has brought about a new interest in the acquisition of religious knowledge and especially in the study of hadith, and, though this is a laudable development, it has also been accompanied by a gratuitously critical attitude towards earlier scholars as well as an eagerness to assert one's own authority as teacher and mufti. The questioner apparently has the Islamist intellectuals in mind as well

as those studying in institutions of Islamic learning, such as the Saudi Islamic universities. In response, al-ʿUthaymin underscores the need for respect of earlier scholars and their contributions, but a more persistent theme here and elsewhere concerns the danger of speaking about matters of religion in the absence of adequate knowledge and competence (ibid.: 190–3). To speak of things of which one has no knowledge is a great sin, and this includes assuming the mantle of a preacher or a scholar without proper knowledge; it also includes challenging political authority without justification (cf. ibid.: 122–3, 127, 215–17). Al-ʿUthaymin was a prominent member of the Saudi religious establishment, in close alliance with the Saudi royal family. His warnings against speaking without knowledge and 'trampling on the honour of the scholars and the rulers' (ibid.: 216–17) is probably to be seen in the context of the Gulf War of 1991 and its aftermath, when the decision of the Saudi king to invite Western troops to help defend the kingdom against the threat of an Iraqi invasion was bitterly criticised by Islamists as well as by lower-ranking Saudi ulama, who were also highly critical of the leading members of the Saudi religious establishment for their close ties with the ruling elite (Zaman 2002: 152–60; cf. Fandy 1999; Asad 1993: 200–36). But these warnings also point to his recognition of the need to reaffirm where religious authority properly resides. One may not need an *ʿalim* to study and understand the Qurʾan, but al-ʿUthaymin seems to have little doubt that it is ultimately the ulama who determine when the boundaries of proper interpretation have been overstepped and what counts as knowledge *sufficient* to expound on matters religious.

In an earlier generation and a different milieu, the Deobandi *ʿalim* Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi was far more explicitly insistent on the authority of the ulama than Salafi scholars like al-ʿUthaymin and al-Qaradawi have been. Echoing a theme that has had many expressions in the discourses of the ulama, Thanawi (1416 AH, vol. 1: p. 62) argued that scholars of religion ought to be seen as 'experts' on a par with specialists in any other field; without its experts, the ulama, Islam itself was in jeopardy. In late colonial India, when many among the products of Westernised educational institutions had come to think of the ulama's institutions as increasingly irrelevant to the needs of modern life, and it was not uncommon for politically quietist ulama like Thanawi to be challenged to prove their 'usefulness' by actively participating in anti-colonial political causes, Thanawi also insisted on the need for a division of labour. No civilised community can exist unless its members divide the functions necessary for their welfare amongst themselves, any more than a house can be built without allocating different tasks to those skilled in each (Thanawi 1416 AH, vol. 1: 301; cf. Thanawi n.d. vol. 1: 7–9). The usefulness of the ulama, and indeed their indispensability, lies in providing religious guidance to ordinary people as well as to political leaders, not in entering other professions or *becoming* political leaders. But, just as they ought to leave the ordinary business of life to others, others must submit

to them in matters of religion. The political leaders of the community ought to have the ulama evaluate whether their politics conform to *shari'a* norms; and people should consult with the ulama on all matters, read their books, write to them for guidance and order their lives in the light of their teaching (Thanawi 1416 AH, vol. 2: 347–9).

This was a highly optimistic view of the ulama's authority even in Thanawi's time, and – though the Deobandis have continued to revere his memory – it is decidedly so two generations after his death. Yet, just as the ulama who profess to allow other religious intellectuals into their ranks, sometimes go on then to reaffirm their *own* authority, strong affirmations of the ulama's authority might themselves be accompanied by a recognition that they need to accommodate themselves to changing realities. Thanawi's discourses again provide telling illustrations of such recognition. Even as he stressed the need for a division of labour between the Muslim political leaders and the ulama, Thanawi took a highly differentiated view of the religious sphere itself. For one thing, he did not rule out the permissibility of the ulama's participation in politics (Thanawi 1416 AH, vol. 1: 299–300); and, though his own preference was decidedly against it, some of his closest disciples – including Zafar Ahmad 'Uthmani, the author of the aforementioned *I'la' al-sunan* – were active in the movement for an independent homeland for the Muslims of India and later in Pakistani politics (cf. Zaman 2002: 42). More importantly, Thanawi recognised that religious learning ought to be geared to different needs and to be tailored accordingly. As for the ordinary believers, he thought it sufficient that they devote a year or so to religious education in order to become acquainted with the fundamental principles of their religion (Thanawi 1416 AH: 550–2). The assumption here seems to have been that this year-long instruction would not only educate them in the basic Islamic beliefs and practices, but also equip them with the tools necessary for their receptivity to the ulama's continuing guidance. But Thanawi saw even those with more of a taste for advanced religious learning in differentiated terms as well. He believed that the full madrasa curriculum of ten years or so ought to be reserved only for those who had the ability, the motivation, and the time to complete it successfully. Not everyone had that sort of time, however, even when they were not lacking in motivation. For them, he devised a drastically shorter curriculum of 'essential' Arabic texts that would take no more than thirty months to complete. He cautioned:

> One should not think that if the same thing can be accomplished in two and a half rather than ten years, the earlier [and other] ulama were only wasting people's time by requiring the longer duration. For what is taught in ten years is not exactly what is to be taught in [a curriculum of] two and a half years; rather, the latter brings together the essentials, with which one can fortify one's religion, and indeed become a religious scholar, of middling status but with broad learning. (ibid., vol. 1: p. 553; cf. ibid.: 553–6)

Elsewhere, and more dramatically, Thanawi argued that the nature of the obligation to acquire proficiency in religious learning (*tabahhur fi-l-ʿulum*) had changed in his time.[7] This obligation had been what Muslim jurists call a *fard kifaya*, a duty that some members of the Muslim community might perform on behalf of the community as a whole, as contrasted with an obligation every Muslim had to fulfil *individually* (*fard ʿayn*).

> But now the conditions are such that [acquiring proficiency in religious learning] has become an obligation for every single individual. For the protection of religion is an obligation [on everyone] and this cannot be done without adequate knowledge. People have, moreover, come to lack the propensity to follow [others], which also necessitates that they acquire sufficient knowledge of their own.

He continued, however, to emphasise the need to consort with the religious elite (*ahl Allah*) as an equally binding individual obligation, for even the educated are prone to lose their way (Thanawi n.d., vol. 2: 266–7).

Unmistakable in all this is the recognition that even the ulama's learning must take different forms, that there is more than one way of establishing – albeit modestly – one's scholarly credentials and, indeed, that those with a different intellectual formation might also acquire a modicum of such credentials. Ultimately, Thanawi's articulation of the ulama's religious authority is much stronger than anything in the discourses of, say, al-Qaradawi. But even Thanawi not only recognises that the ulama are far from a homogeneous entity but seeks, through changes in the curriculum, to sanction and perpetuate their internal differentiation and that of the religious sphere in which they would operate.

'New' structures of authority

That the ulama's efforts to assert their authority have been vigorous, multifaceted and – despite the magnitude of the challenges they have faced, and their compromises – not unsuccessful should be evident from the foregoing discussion. I conclude this chapter with yet another illustration of such efforts, for it sheds some further light on how the ulama have fared in the modern world. This concerns their initiatives towards the *institutionalisation* of their authority.

The European Council of Fatwa and Research (ECFR) and the International Union for Muslim Scholars, in both of which al-Qaradawi has played a founding role, are among the most recent examples of this institutionalisation. Al-Qaradawi's expansive definition of the ulama may well be seen not as an indiscriminate opening-up of the ulama's ranks but rather as a calculated effort to foster alliances with *like-minded* religious intellectuals and to provide a shared forum – as well as a new institutional identity – to them. On this view, the 'ulama' would be those who, irrespective of their formal educational credentials,

share a particular orientation, particular epistemological assumptions, and who are therefore best suited to the articulation of 'Islamic' discourses. These discourses are, for their part, to be given expression from a particular forum, be it the ECFR in matters relating specifically to Muslims living in Europe, or the International Union for Muslim Scholars more broadly.

The *Dar al-Ifta'* ('Fatwa Centre') of Egypt, established *c.*1895, represents a much earlier effort towards the institutionalisation of authority, itself building on existing juridical hierarchies (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997: 100–45). In India, a *Dar al-Ifta'* was established at the Deoband madrasa two years before the Egyptian institution of that name (Metcalf 1982: 146), and, although any particular fatwa was still typically issued by a single jurisconsult (sometimes with endorsements from other scholars), the *fatwas* in question now also carried the imprimatur, and the collective authority, of the madrasa. In contemporary India, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) represents yet another initiative towards the institutionalisation of authority. Established in 1973 and dominated by Deobandi ulama but eager to claim allegiance from other religious orientations as well, the AIMPLB has presented itself as the locus of authoritative guidance on all matters relating to Islamic law, and especially to the laws of personal status. This organisation played a leading role in helping overturn, through parliamentary legislation, the verdict of the Supreme Court of India, which had envisaged changes in the divorce laws as generally prescribed by the Hanafi school of law (cf. Zaman 2002: 167–8). Closely allied with the AIMPLB is the Indian Fiqh Academy, founded in 1989 to help address the legal problems faced by the Muslims of India. In seeking to rethink certain aspects of Islamic legal norms, the Indian Fiqh Academy (which resembles juridical institutions in several other countries in the Muslim world) has sought to bring Muslim scholars together to deliberate collectively on pressing problems. A crucial theme in the work of the Fiqh Academy is the need for 'collective *ijtihad*'.

Though some among the ulama have sought to emphasise antecedents for it in early Islam (cf. Rahmani 1998: 219–20), aspirations to collective *ijtihad* represent a distinctly modern phenomenon. It has had many expressions. Muslim modernists have often seen the work of the legislative assembly as a form of collective *ijtihad* – which, on this view, is to carry the full authority of a new juridical consensus (see Zaman 2006; cf. also Masud 1995). For the ulama, to whom I limit my comments here, the idea of a collective *ijtihad* serves a number of crucial functions. It allows them to sidestep their longstanding reservations about undertaking *ijtihad* on the grounds that they lack the requisite abilities to do so: the fact that the ulama can engage in *ijtihad* by pooling together their otherwise meagre resources, even as they draw on secular expertise in particular areas of modern life, goes a long way towards assuaging fears that one is taking liberties with Islam in the name of *ijtihad*. Further, in a milieu where the authority of the

schools of law as traditionally understood has been considerably weakened, a collective *ijtihad*, especially when undertaken under the auspices of an institutionalised platform, offers possibilities to fill in some of the space vacated by the traditional schools of law. Finally, institutionalising the authority of the ulama, and of those inclined to work closely with them, offers prospects for political influence, of having claims to represent Islam and the Muslim community at large taken seriously, even of being able to resist the state's intervention in matters of religion. It is this role that best defines the AIMPLB in contemporary India – and it underlies both its appeal in some Indian quarters and its notoriety in others.

Yet this sort of institutionalisation does not assuage all the ulama's anxieties. Even as it seems to offer better prospects of collectively resisting governmental encroachment, a centralised locus of authority may, paradoxically, be not less but more vulnerable to government regulation. In Egypt, governmental efforts to regulate the religious sphere have had unpredictable results, but the very fact that it is al-Azhar on which they have focused has to do with the central position of this institution in the country's religious life. Initiatives towards enhancing this centrality have been a thinly disguised prelude to regulating it more effectively and, through it, the larger religious sphere. In France, governmental efforts to create an institutional structure for the Muslim citizens of the state, so that the government might have a 'privileged interlocutor' on all matters Islamic, poses similar difficulties. The Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM) was established in 2003 to this end, with its members elected through French mosques, though usually not recognisable as ulama. But, as John Bowen (2007: 55) has remarked, this bold French initiative is afflicted by 'a dilemma faced by most efforts to construct a legitimate representation from the top down: those willing to be "co-opted" are also those with the least legitimacy'.

Two points are worth considering in conclusion. First, even where new structures of religious authority have emerged, often bringing new facets of contestation to the public sphere, they have seldom driven other, older claimants to authority from the scene (cf. Kaptein 2004: 125). If *fatwas* issued from the madrasa at Deoband carry considerable weight, individual Deobandi scholars and madrasas elsewhere have continued to issue and publish their own *fatwas* – and these have not necessarily taken the same, 'Deobandi', position on all matters. Nor have leadership roles in the Fiqh Academy precluded individual scholars from acting as jurisconsults in their individual capacity (for one example, see Rahmani 2005; for a similar point with reference to the early history of the Egyptian Dar al-Ifta, cf. Skovgaard-Petersen 1997: 121). Some of al-Qaradawi's own views have, for their part, been glaringly at odds with those of others on the European Council of Fatwa and Research.[8]

Secondly, as the example of the Dar al-Ifta in both Egypt and India suggest, it

is only in a very relative sense that institutional structures of authority are 'new'. Even when established in recent years, they are the product of trends towards standardisation and uniformity that go back to the nineteenth century. As C. A. Bayly (2004: 325–65) has argued, such trends are clearly discernible across the nineteenth-century world in diverse areas of life including the religious; and the history of modern Islam – in varied locales and across the world – exhibits these trends no less than do other major religious traditions. The establishment of a network of madrasas in India, all committed to a shared doctrinal orientation and a shared curriculum, is another example of this standardisation. So is the codification of the *shari'a*: a novel development of great moment that, with some exceptions, ulama across Muslim societies have come to accept.

Yet, alongside the impulse towards standardisation and uniformity are ever greater possibilities for individual expression, for personal taste and for well-informed and sometimes well-publicised challenges to established norms – all of which illustrates, even as it exacerbates, the fragmentation of authority. The effects of standardisation and of fragmentation sit uncomfortably alongside one another, but both are unmistakably present in all modern societies; and, while some antecedents and parallels can be detected for them in pre-modern times, there is little doubt that it is in conditions of modernity that both thrive.

There are not a few ambiguities that the coexistence of these impulses brings in its train. For one thing, if the authority of some among the traditional religious scholars has come to be challenged through the effects of mass education, modern technologies and new possibilities for personal expression, other religious scholars have fared much better. Even as many well-educated Muslims critique the ways of the ulama and revel in their own, direct access to religious texts, it is to select figures *among the ulama* that they often return for the 'proper' elucidation of these texts and norms (cf. Jouili and Amir-Moazami 2006). Particular figures among the ulama may, indeed, be said, not just to have come to terms with the fragmentation of authority (cf. Zaman 2006), but, as 'free riders' – to adopt a Marxist metaphor (cf. Elster 1985: 347–8) – to have benefited from it. This is often accomplished by showing how *they*, unlike many others among their fellow ulama, embody the qualities their modern-educated audiences prize most. Al-Qaradawi is again a case in point here (cf. Zaman 2004b: 136, 145–6). Yet, while distancing themselves from run-of-the-mill ulama, scholars like al-Qaradawi have also striven to counteract the effects of the very fragmentation that has served them well, and to do so in the name of the ulama as a whole. Institutional loci of authority may, for their part, be seen as one response to fragmentation and to the 'free-rider problem' that accompanies it. It represents an effort to close ranks among the ulama, consolidate their influence and find like-minded religious intellectuals active elsewhere. As such, it is a mechanism for fostering new networks, among other things. Yet, these new efforts have

what other ulama would doubtless see as telling weaknesses. Al-Qaradawi may be a 'global mufti' – thanks to satellite television, the Internet and his international associations – but, as Gudrun Krämer has observed, 'his is a peculiarly disembodied voice'. He appears not to have much by way of recognisable students and disciples, that is, the sort of people who have traditionally constituted the channels through which religious scholars transmitted their learning and established their authority (Krämer 2006: 192–3; quotation at 193).

These are unresolved ambiguities in how religious authority is imagined and articulated in the contemporary Muslim world. The contestations of which the ulama have been part throughout their long history, and the transformations they have undergone in modern times, provide unusually rich – though by no means the only – sites for exploring issues of religious authority in Islam. Even the history of the ulama may not give us much by way of sure indicators of how future articulations of authority will fare. But it does provide ample evidence of the endurance, the resourcefulness and the malleability of those wishing to be seen as the authoritative guardians of the Islamic tradition – as well as of their ability to live with uncertain answers to interpretative challenges, and with ambiguity of other sorts.

Summary of chapter

Issues of religious authority are central to debates and contestations on varied facets of Islam in the modern world. These issues have to do, *inter alia*, with where and with whom the authority to interpret the Islamic texts properly rests; the degree to which particular religious practices and institutions can be adapted to changing needs; the basis on which traditional norms can be set aside in favour of new or different ones; and, not least, the scope and limits of governmental regulation of matters religious. Many of these issues are not new, for they were much debated in pre-modern Muslim intellectual, religious and political circles as well. However, they arise with particular force and on an unprecedented scale in conditions of modernity. Mass education and modern technologies have enabled vastly greater numbers of people to have access to sources of religious knowledge than was ever the case before. This has meant new challenges to the claims of the traditionally educated religious scholars, the ulama, by people lacking any specialized training in the Islamic sciences. Contrary to predictions of the demise of the ulama in the face of challenges from lay Muslims as well as the 'new religious intellectuals', this chapter argues that the traditionally educated scholars have continued to adapt their practices and discourses to changing times, enlarging their presence and the range of their activities in a number of Muslim societies. As part of this continuing evolution, many among the ulama have come to base their own authority on more than their professed mastery of the Islamic scholarly tradition; in many cases, this authority has also come to rest on the professed ability to speak persuasively to those educated in modern, Western institutions of learning that, in turn, has helped forge alliances between religio-political activists of varied intellectual backgrounds. Yet, for all the adaptations that the ulama have continued to make in their practices and in their scholarly culture, their claims to religious authority reveal important and unresolved tensions and ambiguities. There are tensions

between claiming authority as part of the ulama's traditional culture and critiquing, even dissociating from, facets of that culture; between individual claims to authority (for example, on the basis of one's scholarly learning) and efforts to institutionalize religious authority in the form of national and transnational associations; and, not least, between recognizing the fragmentation of religious authority and persistent efforts to reclaim interpretative authority in competition with others. In not a few cases, such tensions and ambiguities have to do with lingering suspicion of particular modern institutions, practices and forms of knowledge. Yet equally they arise from the ulama's effort – with varying degrees of enthusiasm, persuasiveness and success – to accommodate their scholarly tradition to the conditions and challenges of modernity and at least partially to base their claims to authority on that effort.

Questions

1. What distinguishes debates on religious authority in pre-modern Islam from modern contestations on this matter?
2. How might the ulama of modern Islam be distinguished from the Muslim modernists and the Islamists?
3. How far-reaching is the fragmentation of religious authority in modern Islam? How is it different from challenges to the authority of the ulama in pre-modern Muslim societies?
4. What sort of differences are observable *within* the ranks of the modern ulama so far as their claims to authority and their manner of articulating these claims are concerned? How are such differences to be accounted for?
5. How has the advent of mass education shaped the ulama's claims to authority?
6. How have initiatives towards instititionalizing religious authority reconfigured claims to it in modern Islam?
7. To what degree might the ulama of modern Islam be said to have come to terms with the fragmentation of their authority? What sorts of tension are discernible in the ulama's increasing recognition of the fragmentation of their authority, on the one hand, and, on the other, the effort to reassert that authority?
8. How has globalization impacted conceptions and articulations of religious authority in modern Islam?
9. In what ways do questions of religious authority arise differently in modern Islam than they do for adherents of other religious traditions in the modern world?

Notes

Author's Note: I am very grateful to the editors of this volume for their comments on earlier versions of this chapter.

1. The formulation 'new religious intellectuals' (on which, see Eickelman and Piscatori, 1996: 43–4, 77) refers to those contributing to debates on all matters Islamic in the contemporary Muslim public sphere, but without a formal religious education of the sort acquired in madrasas and comparable institutions.
2. This paragraph draws on an earlier discussion (Zaman 2005: 94).

3. I follow the translation of Butterworth, but with some modifications. On Ghazali's recognition of the 'essential heterogeneity of knowledge' as precisely the major strength of his work and a key factor in his subsequent influence, see Moosa (2005: p. 266).
4. My discussion of the Farangi Mahall here draws on portions of Zaman (2004a).
5. The term 'Salafi' – which literally connotes adherence to the practice of the pious forebears (*salaf*), that is, the earliest Muslims – has come to refer to varied strands among Muslims in modern times. In the early twentieth century, Jamal al-din al-Qasimi in Syria (d. 1914) and Muhammad Rashid Rida (d. 1935) in Egypt were at the forefront of a Salafi trend that sought to reform and *modernise* existing Muslim institutions and practices in the light of what they saw as the unadulterated teachings of the Islamic foundational texts. This meant, *inter alia*, denying the authority of the medieval schools of law and resorting to *ijtihad* not only to address new legal problems but also to reopen those the earlier jurists had supposedly settled. In the Arabian Peninsula, on the other hand, the Salafi approach has come to be increasingly conjoined with the teachings of Muhammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhab (d. 1791): Wahhabi reformism, too, lays much stress on direct guidance from the foundational texts in the form of *ijtihad*, but not on the modernising orientation of Salafi thinkers like Rida, let alone of Rida's mentor, Muhammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905). The Salafis – in the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere – have had widely different political orientations, ranging from political quietism to guarded public critiques of the religious and the political establishments to radical calls to jihad against all Muslim and non-Muslim foes. In general, the Salafis share much more with one another in their overall orientation to the foundational texts than they do either in their politics or in the precise conclusions they draw from their preferred hermeneutical approach. Yet, as al-Rasheed (2007) has argued, the boundaries between Salafis of varied orientation remain fluid.
6. However, in situations where medieval Sunni schools of law coexisted and the norms of one school of law seemed to suit a particular situation better, it was not uncommon for a legal dispute to be referred to the judge of that legal school (cf. Rapoport 2003). This preserved the boundaries of the schools of law without yet making judicial practice inflexible.
7. Thanawi is said to have made this statement in 1932, just over a decade before his death (Thanawi n.d.: vol. 2, pp. 266–7; for the date, see ibid.: 264).
8. Al-Qaradawi has argued, for instance, that the marriage of a European woman who converts to Islam while her husband does not remains valid – in opposition both to a broad medieval consensus on the impermissibility of such a marriage and of a contrary opinion by most of his colleagues on the European Council of Fatwa and Research. See European Council of Fatwa and Research (2003).

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CHAPTER 9

Islamic Modernism

Muhammad Khalid Masud

Introduction

The experience of modernity in Muslim societies has varied from a sense of total disruption of their life world to recognition of progress and improvement in their political economies (Jami'a 1984: 4). Muslims mostly perceive modernity in terms of Western modernity and vary in their views on its relevance and compatibility to Islam. Muslim modern trends range from reform to total rejection of either tradition or modernity. Discourses on reform also differ in their perception of modernity and tradition. This chapter studies Islamic Modernism, one of these reform discourses. It is an interactive discourse that revisited the notions of compatibility, modernity and tradition during its debate with others.

Studying Islamic modernism is quite problematic; no Muslim thinker calls him or herself an Islamic modernist. Also, it overlaps with at least three other discourses on reform. The first discourse, often described as revivalism and reform (Voll 1982; Rahman 2000), continues from pre-modern times. It calls for the revival (*ihya*) of the practice of the Ancestors (*salaf*), the first three generations of Muslims, and reform (*islah*) of religious practices such as visiting of graves for intercession, fertility, health, and prosperity, celebrating birth and death anniversaries of saints, and adherence (*taqlid*) to schools of law. The Wahhabi movement in the Hijaz revived this discourse in the late eighteenth century, and it survives today in various Salafi movements. This approach paved the way for other reform discourses, as it promoted the ideas of self-criticism and individual responsibility. Radicalised forms of this discourse in the twentieth century, however, popularised opposition to modernity.

The second discourse regards adherence to tradition and religion as the main cause of backwardness of Muslims. It is a non-religious approach, sometimes also called 'Western modernist', or simply modernist discourse. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (d. 1938), who abolished the Ottoman caliphate, closed religious institutions and adopted European codes, is often mentioned as an example of this discourse. This approach is not essentially anti-religious but does not derive its justification from Islamic tradition.

The third discourse, the focus of this chapter, is generally designated as 'Islamic modernism' (Aziz Ahmad 1967; Rahman 1970; Moaddel 2005), as

it aims to root 'modernism' in Islamic tradition. It shares with the other two discourses the urge to reform Muslim society but disagrees with their rejection of modernity or tradition. Instead, it affirms that modernity is compatible with Islam, and a new Islamic theology is required in order to justify this compatibility.

The discourse appears paradoxical and apologetic on some points. For instance, it admires Western sciences and technology but is mostly critical of the West. Islamic modernism explains this ambivalence by distinguishing 'modernisation' from 'Westernisation'. Nevertheless, Muslim perceptions of what constitutes the core ideas of modernity seem to be informed by how 'Western modernity' unfolded itself in their experience. For instance, the changing perceptions of modernity as science, nationalism and human rights coincide with the shifting emphasis in 'Western modernity'. These paradoxes must be studied with reference to the debates in which reform discourses developed in Muslim society. The chapter suggests that, since this discourse is primarily addressed to Muslims, it must adopt a methodology that is familiar to Muslims. This is necessary also because, during its interaction with others, it realised that other discourses rejected modernity or tradition because of their inefficient methods of reasoning. In Islam, theology had evolved historically as a methodological framework to deal with intellectual challenges. Modernity posed challenges to which the old theology could not respond. This theology not only refused to recognise these challenges but also rejected modernity. Islamic modernism, therefore, called for a new theology. Despite its pivotal significance, this call has not been studied properly. The chapter proposes to underscore Islamic modernism as a movement for a new Islamic theology.

Before we begin an analysis of these new theologies, a brief account of the development of Islamic theology in the pre-modern period is given first, to illustrate that, because of the continuous search for universal principles, Islamic tradition has been continuously renewing itself.

ʿIlm al-kalam

Theology (*ʿilm al-kalam*) in Islamic tradition evolved as a defensive science to respond to two needs: to justify Islamic beliefs and to provide a framework for justificatory reasoning. The terms *kalam* (theology) and *mutakallim* (theologian) were used first with reference to the Muʿtazila (al-Ashʿari 1990, vol. 2: 20, 124, 150), who held that the idea of accountability on the Day of Judgement required belief in human free will. They also believed that the Qur'an was not co-eternal with God; it was created and appeared in a concrete historical context. The Muʿtazila named this theology the science of *ʿilm al-kalam* (al-Shahristani 1975: 32). The systematic development of theology started under the patronage of the caliphs al-Ma'mun (reigned 813–32) and al-Muʿtasim (833–42), when the

Muʿtazila borrowed heavily from Greek metaphysics and logic (al-Shahristani 1975: 32). This theology was defeated by the hadith group, which held that the Qur'an was eternal and thereby was and is universally binding. Official imposition and Abbasid patronage of the Muʿtazila theology and court trials of leaders of the hadith movement like Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 855) led to the unpopularity and eventual defeat of the Muʿtazila.

Abu'l-Hasan al-Ashʿari (d. 936) criticised the Muʿtazila for relying on non-scriptural sources (al-Ashʿari 1990, vol. 2: 50) and called for a new theology based on Islamic traditional beliefs, which should be given a fundamental position in the religious sciences similar to logic in philosophy (al-Shahristani 1975: 32). Ibn Khaldun (d. 1382), defining theology as 'a science that provides rational proofs about faith and refutes the innovators who deviate from the path of the ancients', describes al-Ashʿari theology as a turning point in its history of Islamic theology (Ibn Khaldun 1989: 458).

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) found theology and jurisprudence in his time critically deficient. Since theology functions as a universal framework (*al-ʿilm al-kulli*) to all religious sciences, its premises (*kulliyat*, *muqaddimat*) must be definitive to arrive at conclusive proofs (al-Ghazali 1970, vol. 1: 5), whereas it employs merely widespread popular premises (*muqaddimat mashhurat*), which are insufficient for this purpose (al-Ghazali 1970, vol. 1: 48). He added logic to the list of religious sciences. Al-Ghazali's theology employed logic as a method of reasoning. Ibn Khaldun (1989: 466) called it modern theology (and their practitioners *muta'akhkhirun*), distinguishing it from the earlier ones that relied on philosophical premises.

Causality was one of the critical issues in Ashʿari theology. Divine commands could not be rationalised for the purpose of analogical reasoning (*qiyas*), because God cannot be said to act under causality. Ashʿari jurists suggested that the middle term or cause (*ʿilla*) must be discovered in the Divine text. Al-Ghazali (1970, vol. 2: 230) clarified further that reason given in a Divine command is not a cause; it is only a sign. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1210) explained causality as accidental; humans observe two events happening at the same time repeatedly (*ʿada*) and mistake one for the cause of the other (Masud 2000: 144). Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) disagreed and faulted al-Ashʿari theology for confusing the two realms of nature and morals. Human agency is not required in the execution of laws of nature, but it is necessary in religious and moral laws (Masud 2000: 149). Ibn Taymiyya's reconstruction of Islamic theology paved the way for further discussions on rationality and authenticity.

Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi (d. 1388) explored the concept of the intent of the Lawgiver in divine commands as the ground for legal reasoning and developed a jurisprudence of the objectives of law (*maqasid al-shariʿa*). He distinguished between *ʿibada* (religious obligation) and *ʿada* (customary obligation). The former is prescribed only by revelation as human reason cannot determine the

good and bad in such matters. *ʿAda* – which also means recurrence, nature, habit, practice, and custom – is the area where good and bad are determined by human reason on the basis of recurring experience. *Shariʿa*, or Divine Law confirms human experience and commands as good what is so in its absolute meaning. Instead of deduction, al-Shatibi employed the method of induction to discover universal rules (*kulliyat*) in the Qur'an and hadith as well as in habits and customs. These universal rules were more exact (*qatʿiyya*) and conclusive than selective texts. He also suggested the concept of 'common good' (*maslaha*) as a universal principle which is authenticated inductively by human experience (*ʿada*) as well as by revelation. Humans infer universal principles by a discursive process which is essentially inter-subjective i.e. validated via interaction between discerning subjects. Laws are for the good of mankind, not because they are absolutely and inherently good, but because humans have found them so.

Shah Waliullah of Delhi (d. 1768), claimed by some scholars to be the 'father of Islamic modernism' (see, e.g., Ansari 2003, vol. 2: 274), also rejected the old theology. He found it irrational to believe that divine commands obliged humans to obey for the sake of obedience, not for their good. One of his major works, the *Conclusive Proof of God*, offers rational explanations (*asrar*) for Islamic beliefs and practices, providing historical context, and references to human nature and social history. He also provides intra-textual references to Jewish and Christian scriptures. He relies, however, for his rationalistic world view and belief in universal principles on Greek metaphysics, ethics, philosophy and logic as adopted by Islamic tradition. Debates on modernity found this reliance on Greek metaphysics in traditional theology inadequate to meet modern challenges.

Origins of Islamic modernism

The origins of Islamic modernism can be traced to at least four interrelated factors. First, a sense of decline was felt in the eighteenth century in the Muslim world in general (Masud (ed.) 2008) and led several thinkers like Shah Waliullah (d. 1762) to stress the need for reform (Naz 2008: 186). This sense generated reform movements in the nineteenth century in several Muslim societies. Shakib Arslan's (d. 1946) *Our Decline and its Causes*, published in 1939, among several others, sums up this continued concern most eloquently. Islamic modernism was one of several reform discourses that sought to answer this question.

Secondly, this sense of decline was further aggravated by the colonial rule on the Muslim world in the nineteenth century, either directly, as in India and Egypt, or indirectly, as in Iran and the countries under the Ottomans. Justifying colonial rule, most European scholars described political and social systems in the Muslim world as essentially backward, tyrannical and unreasonable and explained that Islam was unable to respond to modern challenges. William

Hunter (d. 1900), an official of the East India Company, identified religious attitudes as the main cause of the revolt in 1857; Muslims were religiously bound to oppose non-Muslim rule. Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) rebutted Hunter, clarifying that it was a revolt against bad colonial governance and that all Indian soldiers, Hindus and Muslims alike, participated in that revolt.

Similarly, in France, Ernest Renan (d. 1892), the well-known French Orientalist, blamed Islam for opposing reason and sciences (Renan 1883). In 1895, Gabriel Hanotaux, a French cabinet minister and historian, justified French colonial rule in Africa by arguing that Islam opposed reason and reform and supported tyranny. In response to this criticism, Muslims felt obliged to defend their religious identity.

Thirdly, Christian missionaries who arrived in the wake of colonial adventures attacked Muslim beliefs in Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an. They pointed to Islamic teachings on jihad, slavery, polygamy and the condition of Muslim women and claimed that Christianity was a superior religion, as it did not allow such beliefs and practices. Sometimes, the colonial administrators in British India, Egypt and North Africa also officially patronised debates organised by the Christian missions. William Muir (d. 1905), Secretary of the Frontier Province in India, shared this missionary zeal. On the suggestion of Revd C. G. Pfander (Troll 1978: 113), he wrote a biography of Muhammad in which he censured Muhammad's marriages and wars from a Christian viewpoint (Muir 1861, vol. 4: 308). Consequently, most Muslims perceived modernity and colonial reforms as the promotion of Christianity.

Fourthly, Muslim youth educated in modern institutions believed that modernisation meant Westernisation; they disregarded and often ridiculed Islam and Muslim practices. Islamic modernists regarded this development as a threat to their religious and cultural identity and found it necessary to explain that modernity was not in conflict with Islam.

The discourse did not start concurrently in the Muslim world, yet it manifested two main concerns: reform in education, and the need for a new theology. Usually, Jamaluddin al-Afghani (d. 1897) and his disciple Mufti Muhammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905) are credited as founders of Islamic modernism, but this is probably due to an exclusive focus on thinkers in the Arab Middle East. Arguably, Sayyid Ahmad Khan was the first to write on the subject. His *Mohammedan Commentary of the Holy Bible* (1862), in which he sought harmony between science and scriptures, and *Life of Mahomet* (1870), in which he critically studied the issues of polygamy and jihad, appeared much earlier than the main writings of Afghani and ʿAbduh, which were published during 1881–6.

Appraising Ernest Renan's account of Islam and sciences, al-Afghani clarified that Christians had been more hostile to the Greek sciences than Muslims; in fact, they learnt the Greek sciences from the Muslims. In al-Afghani's words, 'the Europeans welcomed Aristotle, who had emigrated and become Arab;

but they did not think of him at all when he was Greek and their neighbor' (Keddie 1968: 185). ʿAbduh (1897) argued that, whereas religious authority in Christianity was founded on opposition to reason, the tenets of Islam were based on reason. The context of these debates consisted of recent discoveries in the natural sciences, especially Darwin's theory on the origin of species, which impacted on the Christian and Muslim scriptures directly. Al-Afghani rejected the materialist view of modern science and criticised Darwin for degrading humanity. Khan, on the other hand, took science discoveries as a challenge and proposed a new theology harmonising science and scriptures.

Trained in traditional sciences, Sayyid Ahmad Khan joined the judiciary as a sub-judge under the East India Company in 1840 and remained loyal to the company during the 1857 Indian revolt – but the event transformed his personality deeply. As an author of several scholarly works on religion, history and archaeology, he was proud of his heritage. He believed that Muslims and Europeans must share their heritage of sciences with each other. His personal experience of modernity in 1857 made him critical of British perceptions of Islam and Muslims. To promote mutual appreciation of each other's heritage of sciences, he founded a Scientific Society in 1867 to translate Arabic books on natural sciences into English and works on modern science into Urdu. A visit to Britain in 1869 left him greatly impressed by English culture and educational institutions. On his return, he launched a journal on moral reform (*Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*) in 1870 and founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College of Aligarh in 1875, India's first Muslim university, which emulated Cambridge and Oxford and was intended to educate a new class of modern Indian Muslim gentlemen.

He was convinced that Muslims needed religious reform, especially in theology and jurisprudence. Addressing a gathering of Muslims in Lahore in 1884, Khan said: 'Today we are, as before, in need of a modern theology [*jadid ʿilm al-kalam*] whereby we should either refute the doctrines of modern sciences, or undermine their foundations, or show that they are in conformity with Islam' (Troll 1978: 311). He chose the third option, as the Muslim theologians had done in early Islam adopting Greek sciences. He said that the old theology founded on Greek metaphysics was no longer sufficient, because, unlike the old, the new sciences relied on experiment and observation (Rahman 1979: 217; Baljon 2003, vol. 1: 287). Khan's *Principles of Exegesis* (1892) proposed a new theology that discarded the notion of conflict between science and the Qurʾan, because science stands for nature and its laws, which are the creation of God. The Qurʾan as the word of God cannot be in conflict with Nature as the Work of God: 'There is no matter in the Qurʾan disagreeing with the laws of nature' (Khan 1970: 30). He rejected the supernatural character of miracles by saying: 'We declare openly that there is no proof of the occurrence of anything supernatural, which, as it is asserted, is the miracle' (ibid.: 31). The Qurʾan, 18: 110, clarifies that the Prophet Muhammad did not claim any miracle. Khan

explained that the earlier scholars described these events as miracles because 'the natural sciences had not progressed and there was nothing to draw their attention to the law of nature and to make them aware of their mistakes' (ibid.: 35).

Khan proposed a rule in case of perceived conflict between a law of nature and the Qurʾanic verse: the Work (nature) qualifies the Word (verse) of God (Khan 1970: 34). According to Khan, a verse cannot be taken in its literal meaning if the context requires other meanings, or if the words are used as metaphor. If a verse refers to something that is contrary to the laws of nature, then we must regard the statement as a metaphor. For instance, statements about God sitting on the throne or about God's hand were not taken in their literal meaning even by ancient theologians.

Khan held that miracles may be extraordinary, but they are not supernatural: first, because the Qurʾan declares specifically that Divine Laws do not change; secondly, because modern scientific discoveries have demonstrated that these events were not supernatural. His focus on nature, especially with reference to miracles, attracted the ulama's bitter criticism in India. The reformist Deoband School, established in 1867 as a centre for revivalist discourse, was foremost in this opposition. In 1886, Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi (d. 1943), a mufti associated with this school, issued a long fatwa condemning Khan as a heretic (*mubtadiʿ*) and his associates as a 'new naturist sect' (*firqa muhditha nechariyya*) on the basis of fifty 'heretical' statements in their writings (Thanawi 1992, vol. 6: 166–85). The term *nechariyya* (naturists) derives from the English word 'nature'. In 1890, Mawlana Qasim Nanawtawi (d. 1879), the founder of the Deoband school, wrote a treatise titled *Assessment of Religious Tenets* strongly refuting Khan's ideas on theological grounds (Aziz Ahmad 1970: 60–76).

Jamaluddin Afghani was in Hyderabad in India from 1879 to 1883 when controversy against Khan began. On a request from Muhammad Wasil, a teacher in the Madrasa Aʿizza in Hyderabad, al-Afghani wrote a *fatwa* against Khan and his followers, branding them as materialists. This *fatwa* was first published in Persian in Hyderabad in 1881 with the title *Haqiqat-i Madhhab-i Nechari wa Bayan-i Hal-i Nechariyan* (Truth about the Naturist Sect and a Description of their Views); its Urdu translation was published in 1884 from Calcutta (Chauhdari 1999: 216). Its Arabic translation by Muhammad ʿAbduh (published in Beirut in 1885) had a more threatening title: *Risala fi ibtal madhhab al-dahriyyin wa-bayan mafasidihim wa-ithbat anna al-din asas al-madaniyya wa-l-kufr fasad al-ʿumran* (A Treatise in Refutation of the Materialist Sect, an Account of their Evils and the Proof that Religion is the Basis of Civility and Disbelief destroys Society), shortened in later editions to *al-Radd ʿala al-dahriyyin*.

In this treatise, al-Afghani defines nature as matter and *nechariyya* as materialists, arguing that materialism has destroyed religious and moral values. Tracing materialism to the Greek philosopher Democritus, he identifies Darwin as a

modern materialist scientist whose theory of evolution degrades humanity. Clearly, al-Afghani had not read Khan's writings; he relied on the information he received from the ulama. He condemned Khan as a 'collaborator, who threw off his religion, adopted Christianity, and claimed that all the prophets were Necharis and did not believe in God' (al-Afghani 1884). al-Afghani's perspective on modernity was essentially political; he abhorred Khan for his loyalty to the British.

Arab and European scholars who did not have access to Khan's original writings were widely influenced by al-Afghani. Gibb (1945: 58) cites Afghani, saying: 'the Necharis present themselves before the eyes of the fools as the standard-bearers of science, but only give a wide range of treachery. They are deluded by catchwords; call themselves guides and leaders when they stand in the lowest grades of ignorance and lack of intelligence.'

Muhammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905) came under al-Afghani's influence during the latter's stay in Cairo in 1871. Expelled from Egypt in 1882 for political activities, ʿAbduh joined al-Afghani in Paris in 1883. He worked as editor of the journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa*, a reform journal with pan-Islamic objectives. He returned to Egypt in 1889 and gradually distanced himself from his mentor's political activities.

Despite their different approaches to reform, Khan and ʿAbduh both offered rational explanations of Islamic beliefs and practices, called for reforms in education, language and legal systems, and deeply influenced respectively Urdu and Arabic language and literature. ʿAbduh introduced reforms in religious education and judicial training programs at Al-Azhar University.

ʿAbduh developed a new theology in *al-Islam wa al-nasraniyya maʿa al-ʿilm wa-al-madaniyya* (Islam and Christianity in Relation to Science and Civilisation), published in 1897, and *Risala al-tawhid* (Theology of Unity) published in 1902. The former was his rejoinder to Hanotaux, as already mentioned, and the latter consisted of lectures that he delivered in Beirut in 1886. ʿAbduh explained that, unlike other scriptures, the Qur'an gave authority to human intellect because humanity had reached maturity and Prophecy had ended with Muhammad. Thus reason and revelation came together in the Qur'an for the first time in human history. Islam removed racial discrimination and stood for social justice, and that is why it spread so rapidly.

ʿAbduh defined theology as a science that deals with the belief in the existence of God, His attributes and His prophets, and examined what must be affirmed and denied. In his view, theology plays the same role in religious sciences as logic does in rational sciences. Unlike Khan, who was inclined to the Muʿtazila, ʿAbduh remained closer to the Ashʿaris in his view of the limited capacity of human reason. Man should believe only in those Divine attributes whose knowledge is revealed; it is sufficient to believe that He exists. ʿAbduh and Khan both held that the laws of nature are unchangeable. 'All created things', said ʿAbduh,

'follow natural law. Every being must conform to law or it would be destroyed' (cited in Hourani 1970: 137). ʿAbduh, nevertheless, believed that the laws of nature are created by God and He can cause them to deviate from the routine when He wishes. He, therefore, held that miracles are not impossible and that they must be supernatural and extraordinary in order to prove God's power and support for His prophets (ʿAbduh [1902] 1956: 80–1). ʿAbduh admired the natural sciences, but, unlike Khan, he was not in favour of interpreting the Qur'an in their light (*al-tafsir al-ʿilmi*). While Khan's approach became immediately controversial, there was very little opposition to ʿAbduh.

It was, however, Shaykh Husayn al-Jisr (d. 1909), who popularised modern sciences among the traditional Muslims. In his treatise *Kitab al-risala al-Hamidiyya* (1889), he offered scientific proofs of Islamic beliefs. He explained Prophet Muhammad's miracle of the splitting of the moon (*inshiqaq al-qamar*) in modern scientific language (al-Azmeh 1993: 120). It was a physical phenomenon, which is admissible according to modern physicists (al-Jisr 1889: 35). Jisr was certainly not an Islamic modernist; he used science and its discoveries to justify Muslim practices, including veiling (*hijab*), polygamy and slavery (al-Jisr 1889: 113, 120) as natural, and refuted naturists as materialists (*dahriyyin*), defining them as 'those who regard matter as eternal and uncreated and who do not believe in God or the Prophet' (al-Jisr 1889: 138).

Jisr's epistle was welcomed in the West as a scientific explanation of Islam. Malcolm Kerr calls Jisr 'an enlightened and moderately progressive sheikh' (Kerr 1966: 154). In the Muslim world, Jisr was hailed as a defender of Islam. Rashid Rida published extracts of Jisr's *Risala* in *al-Manar*. Midhat Pasha published its Turkish translation in *Tarjuman Haqiqat*. Its Urdu translation, *Science and Islam*, appeared in 1897 with a subtitle: *jadid ʿilm al-kalam* (New Theology), recommending its use as a textbook (Ali 1984: preface).

Influenced by Jisr's epistle, Mawlana Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi wrote *al-Masalih al-ʿaqliyya li-l-ahkam al-naqliyya* (Rational Grounds for the Traditional Laws) and *al-Intibahat al-mufida li ishkalat al-jadida* (Useful Notes on Modern Problems) to prove the rationality of Islamic beliefs and practices. As to the conflict between science and the revelation, he argued that new scientific theories are only hypothetical and not based on certainty or conclusive proofs. His criteria of rationality are, however, derived entirely from formal Greek logic and metaphysics.

Debates on nature, science and Islam produced several scholarly writings in Turkey as well. In his *Yeni ilm-i-kelam* (New Islamic Theology), published in 1920, Izmirli Ismail Hakki (d. 1946) argued that traditional kalam could not respond to the challenges of scientific materialism, and therefore a new *ilm-i-kelam* was needed (Özervarli 2007: 86). According to him, methods and presuppositions of theology must conform to contemporary needs and philosophical principles, as they have been doing so over time (Özervarli 2007: 85). He admired the writings of al-Afghani and ʿAbduh. Probably under al-Afghani's influence, he was

concerned about the rise of materialism in modern Muslim thought. He did not mention the name, but his criticism apparently addressed Khan. He observed that developments in physics in the twentieth century had questioned the deterministic views about matter propounded in the nineteenth century. Hakki affirmed the belief in miracles but required their rational interpretation. He was opposed to positivism but recognised the theory of evolution.

To sum up this section, the diversity of religious, cultural and political conditions led to varying responses to modernity. Largely, the challenge of modernity was perceived in terms of conflict between science and religion. Khan's new theology not only offered harmony between nature, science and the Qur'an, but also enabled his associates Shibli Nu'mani, Amir 'Ali, Chiragh 'Ali, Mumtaz 'Ali and Altaf Husayn Hali to develop critical perspectives, respectively, on historiography, Muslim intellectual history, Islamic law, women's rights and Urdu language and literature.

Old theologians and the political modernists like al-Afghani opposed the new theology, because it taught harmony between religion and science but separated religion from politics. Under al-Afghani's influence, the separation between religion and science encouraged employing modern technology without integrating it into thought and culture.

Growth

The growth of Islamic modernist discourse was influenced by at least three major developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. First, the rapid scientific discoveries and progress of knowledge led to a dynamic rather than a mechanical view of the universe and nature. Secondly, the rise of movements for national identity introduced an element of subjectivism in the discourse instead of objectivism. Thirdly, movements for liberation popularised an oppositional, or rather hostile, attitude to the West and Western modernity. Muslim thinkers like al-Afghani spoke about political renaissance in terms of the unity of the *umma*. Most Europeans called it pan-Islamism, and considered it a threat to the West.

These three developments generated paradoxes in Islamic modernist discourse. Muslim thinkers developed a high regard for modern concepts of liberty and constitutionalism. Despite their hesitations about territorial nationalism, most Muslim thinkers appealed to a territorial idea of the homeland (*watan*). Freedom movements opposed the West bitterly but admired the modern concepts of liberty (*hurriya*), republicanism and democracy (*jumhuriyya*), and constitutionalism (*mashrutiyya*), which were validated by relocating them in Islamic tradition.

In his *Aqwam al-masalik* (The Straight Course), published in 1867, Khayruddin Tunisi (d. 1889) justified the necessity of parliamentary government and a free

press on the basis of the Islamic principle of public interest (*maslaha*). ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi's (d. 1902) *Taba'iʿ al-istibdad* (Attributes of Tyranny) and al-Afghani's *Al-hukuma al-istibdadiyya* (The Rule of Tyranny) criticised despotism as un-Islamic and pointed to its devastating effects on Muslim societies.

In Iran, Muhammad Husayn Nai'ni's (d. 1936) *Tanbih al-umma wa tanzih al-milla dar asas wa usul-i mashrutiyat* (An Admonition to the Nation and an Exposition to the People Concerning the Foundation and Principles of Constitutional Government) argued that constitutional government provides an Islamic solution, as it removes tyranny and promotes the well-being of the community. The principle of democracy solves a crucial political problem in Shiʿa theology, which regarded a legitimate rule impossible in the absence of the Imam (Hairi 1977). Muslim opinion was divided on the question of the Ottoman caliphate in the twentieth century; some called for its preservation and others for its abolition. Abu-l-Kalam Azad (d. 1958) launched a movement in India for the preservation of the Ottoman caliphate. It also declared India a territory from which Muslims must migrate to a Muslim country. In his *Mas'ala-i Khilafat* (The Issue of the Caliphate), published in 1920, Azad defined caliphate as an essential Islamic institution that ensured the unity of the Muslim *umma* and guaranteed democratic governance against tyranny and absolutism. His political theory was essentially founded on the classical doctrine with some major revisions. Analysing the sayings of the Prophet cited in old theologies according to which a Muslim ruler must be from the tribe of Quraysh, he argued that the hadith was not prescriptive; it only stated a fact of history (Azad n.d.: 87–111). The treatise indirectly denounced nationalist movements in the Arab world and in the Balkans, declaring them rebellions against the Ottoman caliph (Azad n.d.: 58–87). To him, the institution of the caliphate was democratic and suited the modern context.

Rashid Rida's (d. 1935) *Al-khilafa aw al-imama al-ʿuzma* (The Caliphate or the Supreme Leadership), written in 1923 before the abolition of the caliphate, also supported its preservation. It was also a restatement of the classical doctrine with some amendments. The ideal universal caliphate was no longer possible and it was imperative to transform it into a democratic consultative system of government that can modernise the *shariʿa*. He regarded the caliphate as necessary for the spiritual and political independence of Islam but proposed to locate it in the core regions of the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Iraq and Palestine. He revised the condition of *ijtihad* for a ruler and the concepts of consultation (*shura*) and authority (*ahl al-hall wa-l-ʿaqd*), transforming them into democratic principles of checks and balances on the caliphal authority. The focus on *shariʿa* stressed the Islamic identity of this republican form of government. Rida found the framework of the nation state too restrictive to suit an Islamic polity.

Muhammad Iqbal's (d. 1938) *Lecture on Ijtihad* of 1924, on the other hand, welcomed the abolition as a transformation of the Ottoman caliphate into a

republican government. In a lecture that he delivered in Lahore amidst a public demonstration against the abolition, he called it an *ijtihad* because it shifted the right to govern from an individual to an institution. He expounded the idea of a democratic Muslim state where the elected assemblies would have the right to legislate *shari'a*.

Iqbal's support for Turkish republicanism was the result of a long and continued deliberation on the issue. In *Khilafat Islamiyya* (Islam and the Islamic Caliphate), written in 1908, he argued that the political sovereignty belonged to the Muslim people, not to a specific individual. Iqbal believed that a universal caliphate was no longer possible. There were three different views on the caliphate in Islam. The Khawarij did not consider *khilafa* as a universal institution. The Mu'tazila accepted a universal caliphate as a matter of expediency only. The majority of the Sunnis believed that the universal caliphate was a religious necessity. The Shi'a defined the nature of governance (*imama*) as divine. In Iqbal's view, modern Turkey had shifted to the view of the Mu'tazila.

According to him, secularism in Turkey did not mean abandoning Islam. The idea of separation of church and state is not alien to Islam. The difference between the European and Islamic framework of separation is that in Islam it is a division of functions, while in Europe it was founded on a metaphysical dualism of spirit and body (Iqbal [1930] 1986: 122). Islam was, from the very beginning, a civil society with laws civil in their nature though believed to be revelational in origin (Iqbal [1930] 1986: 123).

In Egypt, 'Ali 'Abd Al-Raziq's (d. 1966), *Al-Islam wa usul al-hukm* (Islam and the Foundations of Governance), published in 1925, also endorsed abolition, arguing that political authority and the state, and hence the caliphate, were not essential in Islam. The Qur'an and the Sunna provide no specific instructions on this subject. During the subsequent debates, religious political thought generally stood for pan-Islamism, while movements for nationalism regarded religion as an unsuitable foundation for national identity. Muslims in South Asia were divided on the question of nationalism; however, the majority defined national identity in religious terms.

Muhammad Iqbal formulated the idea of Muslim nationalism as he found in faith a source of individual autonomy. He was among the few who defined the concept of identity in the nineteenth century in terms of self-consciousness. The religious identity provided the Muslims with a basis for national identity. He observed that identity is essentially the concept of the self as the essence of being and true self-empowerment is rooted in the belief of *tawhid*. He developed the idea of the dynamic self (*khudi*) that resisted and reformed the fatalistic decadent view of tradition and called for a will-rooted ethical community. His idea of Muslim nationalism was territorial. In his Allahabad address in 1930, he demanded 'the formation of a consolidated Muslim state in the best interest of India and Islam'. It was to provide peace and security for India and 'for Islam,

an opportunity to rid itself of the stamp that Arabian imperialism was forced to give it, to mobilise its law, education and culture and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit and with it the spirit of modern times' (cited in Masud 2003: 119).

Diverse discourses on nationalism made the notion of national identity quite ambiguous among Muslims. Abu-l Kalam Azad and a majority of the ulama in India were pan-Islamists as they strove for the preservation of the Ottoman caliphate. Yet, in India, they supported a composite territorial nationalism. Iqbal was also a great admirer of al-Afghani and romanticised pan-Islamism but proposed Muslim nationalism and supported the idea of a separate homeland for Muslims in India. Mawlana Mawdudi opposed territorial nationalism in any form.

Muslim national identity was part of Iqbal's new theology, which he developed in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* published in 1930. He rejected old theology as 'concepts of theological systems, draped in the terminology of a practically dead metaphysics' and invited a new Muslim identity between tradition and modernity. He said: 'The only course open to us is to approach modern knowledge with a respectful but independent attitude and to appreciate the teachings of Islam in the light of that knowledge, even though we may be led to differ from those who have gone before us' (Iqbal [1930] 1986: 78).

Iqbal saw the question of religion and modernity as a problem of the impossibility of reliving the special type of inner experience on which religious faith rests, which had become further complicated for modern man, who has developed habits of concrete thought and suspects that inner experience is liable to illusion. In his view, intellectual thought and religious experience were complementary to each other. Religion is not the product of pure rational argument, yet it stands more in need of rational foundations of its principles than science. A rational examination of religious experience must acknowledge the centrality of religion. The old theology, relying on cosmological, teleological and ontological approaches to religion, took a limited and mechanistic view of things. Similarly, the classical rational and natural sciences such as physics, biology and psychology also had a static and sectional view of the universe. Modern science rejects the old concept of matter and defines it in terms of a relationship between changing space and time. To Iqbal, modern sciences can help us better to understand human religious experience, but old theological frameworks limit the application of modern sciences in this regard.

Iqbal examined several philosophical issues where old frameworks restricted modern thought. The concept of time is one of such issues. Iqbal differentiated between different experiences of time. He proposed that religious experience shows that time is an essential element in reality. Real time is not serial time, to which the distinction of past, present and future is essential; it is pure duration

– that is, change without succession, pulverised by thought – a kind of device by which reality exposes its ceaseless creative activity to quantitative measurement. It is in this sense that the Qur'an says: 'And of Him is the change of the night and of the day' (Iqbal [1930] 1986: 47). He called for restructuring Muslim mind according to this consciousness.

Stressing the significance of self and its autonomy, Iqbal explained that it was difficult for a natural scientist and a theologian to understand the autonomy of the self; they described it either in mechanistic terms or as a simple illusion. The self is the centre of perception, and its reality is too deep for the intellect to appreciate. The Qur'an makes a distinction between creation and direction; the sciences study creation and the self belongs to the realm of direction. The Qur'an shows how prophecy as a fundamental religious experience transforms itself into a living world force. The end of prophecy, as the core concept of Islamic culture, affirms the appearance of inductive reason to guide humans to knowledge. The Qur'an's invitation to study of history and natural phenomena stresses change, diversity and dynamism in the universe.

Ijtihad as a principle of inductive reasoning demonstrates in the eyes of Iqbal the dynamism of the universe in Muslim perception but also its own role as a principle of movement in the social structure in Islam. Ever since the establishment of schools, the law of Islam was reduced to a state of immobility. Iqbal argued that the Qur'an is not a legal code; its purpose is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his relation with God and his creations. He pleaded for collective *ijtihad* and the institutionalisation of the principle of consensus (*ijma'*), suggesting that modern parliaments can play the latter role. Iqbal's criticism of the West, admiration of the Muslim past and call for Muslim unity gained some popularity. His ideas of self-autonomy, *ijtihad* and social sciences did not appeal to Muslims in the subcontinent, but, as we shall see in the next section, they influenced a number a Muslim intellectuals, especially in Iran, to engage in the new epistemologies.

The Muslim societies of South East Asia did not produce great modernist thinkers comparable to Khan and 'Abduh, but the Islamic modernist ideas that spread there from Egypt influenced important reformist movements that are without parallel elsewhere. The Indonesian associations Sarekat Islam and Muhammadiyah (established in 1911 and 1912, respectively) became mass movements that combined the call for *ijtihad* with that for social and economic reform. Some of the South East Asians studying in Mecca or at al-Azhar were strongly influenced by the ideas of 'Abduh and Rashid Rida. In South East Asia itself, Islamic modernist thought first found a following in the cosmopolitan environment of Singapore and Penang and among the outward-looking Minangkabau ethnic group of West Sumatra.

Two men who had actually studied with 'Abduh in Cairo, Syed [Sayyid] Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi (d. 1934) and Muhammad Tahir Jalaluddin (d. 1954),

launched the first reformist magazine, *al-Imam*, in Singapore in 1906. This was soon followed by *al-Munir* in West Sumatra (1911). Both magazines were modelled on ʿAbduh's and Rida's *al-Manar* and dedicated themselves to the struggle against innovations (*bidʿa*) and superstitions (*khurafat*). The influence of ʿAbduh was perhaps felt even more in educational reform than in religious thought. Much of the energy of South East Asian Islamic modernists went into the establishment of a new type of schools, which combined Islamic with general subjects and used modern didactic methods (Noer 1973; Laffan 2003; Noor 2004).

To sum up, modernity in this phase unfolded itself in terms of a conflict between religious and national identity; Muslim thinkers mostly rejected the idea of separation between religion and politics. It generated political theologies of nationalism but also a deeper examination of subjectivism, self-autonomy, rights and governance.

The end of Islamic modernism

After independence, Islamic modernist discourse was engaged in two very complicated tasks: the critical analysis of colonialism and the reform of Muslim society. We call this period the end of Islamic modernism, as it was superseded by movements of fundamentalism or Islamism that were opposed to modernity but whose interaction produced several new interpretations of tradition. In general, human rights, law reforms and secularism remained the central issues of debate between Islamic modernists and Islamists. Islamic modernist discourse entered into more sophisticated discussions on Islamic subjectivism, self-knowledge and post-colonial epistemology.

In Algeria, Malek Bennabi (d. 1973) studied the impact of colonialism on the Muslim mind. In his *Les Conditions de la Renaissance* (1948), he diagnosed that the inferiority complex among Muslims living in the underdeveloped world inhibited them to realise the significance of new ideas. In the nineteenth century, power was defined by industry and military strength, but in the twentieth century it was the development of new ideas that influenced international relations. Awed by the superpowers, underdeveloped countries continued defining arms, oil revenues, airplanes and banks as indices of power and progress. In *Vocation de l'Islam*, Bennabi (1954) explained that colonised Muslim minds do not realise that only a dynamic society produces new ideas that can lead to a cultural renaissance. Muslim writers keep digging up past treasures instead of bridging progress with new ones.

Islamists expounded Islamic ideology based on the supremacy of *shariʿa* and the sovereignty of God against secularism and democracy. They opposed reform, especially in Muslim family laws. The Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt), Jamaʿat-i Islami (India and Pakistan), Masyumi (Indonesia) and PAS (Malaysia)

all called for the Islamic state and gained popularity by opposing modernity as materialism and secularism.

Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (d. 1979) of the Jama-at-i Islami and Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) of the Muslim Brotherhood developed their respective theologies of the sovereignty (*hakimiyya*) of God and supremacy of *shari'a* to counter the idea of the sovereignty of the people and the nation state. However, gradually their demand for implementation of the *shari'a* by the state left the concept of the nation state rooted in this political theology. They contested with Islamic modernists on the issues of jihad, polygamy, the status of women, and *ijtihad*.

Mawdudi equated modernity with secularism, which he translated as 'denial of religion' (*la-diniyyat*). To him, the Islamic state is a theo-democracy (*ilahi jamhuri hukumat*) as opposed to secular democracy (*la-dini jamhuriyyat*). In Islam, people are not absolutely free to make their own laws; there are Divine limits (*hudud*) on human freedom. In his ideology, the economy is regulated through the principles of private property, the collection of Islamic taxes and the replacement of banking and usury by contracts of business partnership (*mudaraba*). Family life is governed by the laws of veiling and segregation between men and women (*hijab*), male supervision, rights and duties according to social status, and laws about marriage, divorce and a qualified permission of polygamy. Laws about crime and punishment are divinely prescribed; there is no place for human legislation.

Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), who, as a member of Pakistan's Council of Islamic Ideology, provided scholarly support for reforms in Muslim family laws, became the target of the ulama's severe criticism. The campaign against him included threats to his life and ended with his resignation and flight to Chicago, where he taught until his death.

Fazlur Rahman's *Islamic Methodology in History* in 1965 called for a new approach to Islam and modernity by historicising Islamic law and legal theory. The Qur'anic injunctions can be understood and extended to modern situations only by placing them in historical context. He applied this methodology to analyse the Qur'anic verses about the status of women's legal evidence, age of marriage, polygamy and divorce.

Rahman defined modernity with reference to specific forces, which were generated by, and were also responsible for, the intellectual and socio-economic expansion of the modern West. He argued that, although the impact of the West cannot be denied, Islamic modernism cannot be properly understood unless seen as the continuation of the reform movements of the eighteenth century. Islamic modernism, in Rahman's view, continues to confirm the hold of religion over all aspects of life. He disagreed with the secular modernists, who found life bifurcated into religious and secular compartments. For Rahman, this separation is accidental because Islam is not yet truly the basis of the state in Muslim countries; Islam has been applied only to a narrow religious sphere like personal laws (Rahman 1969: 253).

Rahman disagreed with those who considered secularism to be the ultimate phase of modernity. He explained that secularism in Muslim societies appears imminent because of the rigidity of the conservative ulama. He also held the Islamic modernists responsible for an 'apologetic-controversial literature' that romanticised Islamic civilisation and 'created a barrier against further modernist development' (Rahman 1969: 252).

Secularism is not essentially a uniting force in Muslim societies:

> Unless secularism can be made into an effective force for positive progress, the only way for these [Muslim] countries seems to be to accept religion as the basis of the state and to find within their religions not only adequate safeguards but formulas of genuine equality for minorities with the majority communities. Otherwise sooner or later, but probably in the predictable future these countries would break up into racial and linguistic units on the pattern of Europe. (Rahman 1969: 259)

Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri (b. 1936) in Morocco also found the concept of secularism ambiguous. He clarified that the current ambiguity is created by its debatable definitions in the West, its introduction into the Arab world by Christian Arabs and its translation as *la-diniyya*. Further, Muslim and Christian experiences differ with reference to religious and political authority. In Islam, the political practice was never rationalised and religion always transcended politics. There is a need to stress that religion must be separated from politics.

Al-Jabiri may not be counted among the Islamic modernists, yet he did address the issue of new theology in his *Takwin al-ʿaql al-ʿarabi* (The Structure of Arab Reason), published in 1984. Developing a theology of democracy, he analysed the Islamic modernist discourse that justified democracy in Islam with reference to *shura* (consultation) and the modernist discourse that denied the need for Islamic legitimacy. Al-Jabiri disagreed with both and suggested a two-step solution. First, he proposed that democracy is not exclusive to the West, nor is it rooted in the Western tradition. It is a modern institution. Secondly, *shura* is neither a political nor a thoroughly democratic principle. Also, democracy did not emerge in the Islamic environment. Thus, *shura* is an ethical principle to keep a check on tyranny. It derives its legitimacy from its association with *ijmaʿ*, which is essentially an institution of consultation.

Al-Jabiri explained that the Qurʾan does not address the question of political authority specifically, and that Islamic political theories are only legitimising the historical experiences of the community. The only thing we learn from history is that the community considered the institution of the state and the caliphate as necessities. Islamic political thought is insufficient today, because it takes historical experiences as facts of law and precedents, and lays emphasis on persons rather than on institutions. It makes separation between ethical ideals and actual political conditions lawful. The present ambiguity in Islamic political thought lies in the

fact that the concept of authority is confounded with that of sovereignty. Divine sovereignty is unique, any association with God means idolatry (*shirk*), but human authority cannot be absolute. The problem is caused by using the same term *hakimiyya* for these two distinct concepts (Filali-Ansari 2000: 159). This political ambiguity resulted in fundamentalist and Islamist trends in Muslim communities.

According to al-Jabiri, the reconstruction of the *shari'a* is possible only by revisiting its foundations and the consequences of its implementation. When *ijtihad* was limited to the method of deduction by analogy, it led to rigidity among the schools of law. Instead of analogy, *shari'a* today requires reformulation of the foundation (*ta'sil al-usul*). The Qur'an speaks about two types of verses, clear (*muhkamat*) and ambiguous (*mutashabihat*). The clear verses constitute general universal principles. The Qur'anic verses gather ambiguities also by contradictions produced by historical experience, now by modernity. Al-Jabiri points to an epistemological crisis that has added ambiguities to our understanding of the current political and ethical issues.

The gap between clear and ambiguous verses, which classical hermeneutics believed to be impossible to bridge, is addressed by a number of other intellectuals in the Muslim world. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (b. 1943) in Egypt and 'Abdolkarim Soroush (b. 1945) in Iran have made outstanding contributions to the analysis of epistemology and hermeneutics. Abu Zayd calls for an understanding of the Qur'an in its historical and cultural context. He suggests a new hermeneutical approach to the Qur'an; it must be read as a living discourse reflecting the arguments, debates and dialogue with its addressees. In this discourse, humanist hermeneutics on social and economic justice, and rights for women and the poor, override traditional epistemology.

Soroush's *Qabd wa bast-i ti'urik-i shari'at, nazariya-i takamul-i dini* (Theoretical Contraction and Expansion of the *Shari'a*, A Theory of the Evolution of Religion), published in 1991, also explores the issue of the Qur'anic division of verses into clear and ambiguous. He explains that this division does not mean that the clear and ambiguous verses have been determined and can be differentiated (Dahlén 2001: 320).

Soroush belongs to a group of Islamic modernists that Cooper (2000: 39) calls 'critical Islam'. He perceives modernity in the context of modern natural and social sciences and technology. The religious discussion must be distinguished at two levels: one deals with the sacred, essential and immutable and the other with the human. Islamic scholarship is a human product; it is not sacred. Ignoring this distinction, traditional methodology today stands outdated and fearful. The present scholarship on Islamic law offers two responses: traditional (*fiqh sunnati*) and dynamic (*fiqh puya*). He suggests that Islamic scholarship must transform its approach from revival to reconstruction. In this regard, he shows Iqbal's influence not only in The choice of specific terminology but also in methodology. Reconstruction requires two types of scholars: the expert in tradition ('*alim*)

and the enlightened thinker (*rushanfikr*). Soroush has developed his theory of reconstruction with a discursive reading of Iqbal, Ali Shariʿati and Muhammad Mujtahid Shabistari (b. 1936).

Shabistari considers Islam compatible with the modern natural sciences but asserts that Muslims must seriously examine the epistemological foundations of the modern humanities because they are in conflict with modern scientific methods (Dahlén 2001: 163). He calls for a new theology (*kalam-i jadid*), which he defines as an evaluation of religious beliefs, practices, principles and institutions (Dahlén 2001: 166). Influenced by Iqbal, Shabistari observes that *ijtihad* in Islamic law is not possible without *ijtihad* in theology and anthropology (Dahlén 2001: 173).

This new theology in Iran is an attempt to understand subjectivity and universality as two pillars of modernity (Vahdat 2002). Current Islamic theology defends not only the faith but also the heritage and identity of the *umma*; its approach is both theological and sociological. Current theology distinguishes between faith and the science of faith; the latter is a human construction and cannot be sacred. It is based on an entirely new epistemological system.

During the last decade of the twentieth century, Islamic modernism appears to have receded when the movements for Islamisation spread in almost all Muslim countries. The Islamic Revolution in Iran, Islamisation in Pakistan, the jihad and then Islamic rule by the Taliban in Afghanistan called for the supremacy of the *shariʿa*. These movements not only radicalised Muslim politics, eventually leading to militancy and bitter confrontation with the West, but they also called for authenticity. One of their significant products was the Islamisation of knowledge. 'Every discipline must be remoulded so as to reincorporate the relevance of Islam, along a triple axis constitutive of *tawhid*': three unities of knowledge, life and history (Faruqi 1982: preface). It called for the re-establishment of various disciplines of human knowledge on Islamic foundations (ibid.: 7). Critical studies of Orientalism such as Edward Said's were used to critique Islamic modernism as a product of Orientalism. The new theology, essentially a political discourse (Nasr 1992), failed as an academic project but succeeded in marginalising critical studies of Islam.

In the early twenty-first century, much of the debate in the Muslim world about the universality of human rights, self and gender equality has revived the focus on self and its empowerment as core concepts of modernity. A new theology is emerging, which is trying to root Islamic modernist arguments deeper into the Islamic tradition.

Conclusion

The above brief account of Islamic modernism illustrates how the political environment impacted on the growth of the theology of modernity ('*ilm al-kalam*

al-jadid). In the beginning, Islamic modernists focused on modern sciences and laws of nature, but political modernists opposed this focus, because in their eyes it supported Western materialism and imperialism. Although Islamic modernists admired the West and stressed allegiance to the West for peace and progress, uneasiness in these relations continued. In its period of origin, Islamic modernism gave rise to multiple debates between Western scholars of Islam and Westernised Muslim modernists, as well as traditionalist Muslims and revivalist-reformists. The common universal grounds in these dialogues varied with the multiple and changing perceptions of modernity and of Islam.

Claims of the comprehensive nature of Islam and of its compatibility with modernity proved mutually contradictory; nevertheless, Islamic modernism continued to insist on both. In the beginning, the traditional ulama in general had a narrow vision of religion. They believed in a separation between religion and politics. They resisted the introduction of modern sciences in their educational institutions in order to preserve religious tradition. Later, most of them adopted the view of a comprehensive Islam, unifying religion with politics. From then on, the modern sciences were resisted, because Islam had no need for them.

One must note, however, that not all of the ulama rejected the modern sciences. The Indian *ʿalim* Abu-l-Hasan ʿAli Nadwi (d. 1999) approvingly wrote that the classical Muslim theologians used the Greek sciences as long as these were useful for rationalising Islamic beliefs and practices (Nadwi 1981). His reasoning came close to Islamic modernism but disagreed with it on a very significant point. The Islamic modernists insisted that the old theology based on classical sciences must be replaced by a new theology based on modern sciences. The ulama, who feared that Islamic modernism was leading towards secularity, succeeded in isolating the Islamic modernists from the masses. Rahman (1969: 254) remarked that the way for secularism was paved by the ulama, not by the (Western) modernists. He argued that, by rejecting The new theology and insisting on the comprehensiveness of Islam, the ulama caused intellectual frustration.

Islamic modernist discourse emphasised two points: the compatibility of modernity with Islam and the need for a new theology. When the implications of the various conceptions of modernity were unfolded, the discourse shifted from a deterministic and positivist to an introspective and subjectivist view of modernity. Consequently, post-colonial theologies of modernity have become increasingly subjective and rights oriented. They are largely reflective, self-critical and reform oriented. Being subjective and emancipatory, this discourse has been joined by other reformist groups who are critically reconstructing an authentic Islamic tradition (Baker 2003). They are focusing on the consequences of modernity rather than the concepts and ideals of modernity. These new theologies appear to have replaced the theologies of Islamic modernism.

Summary of chapter

Muslims have perceived modernity in various ways and have held different views on its relevance to and compatibility with Islam. Currents of modern Muslim thought have ranged from reform to the total rejection of either tradition or modernity. Discourses on reform have also varied in their perception of modernity and tradition. This chapter focuses specifically on the discourse of Islamic modernism, which stresses the compatibility of modernity with Islam.

The origins of Islamic modernism can be traced to the widespread Muslim sense of decline in the eighteenth century and responses to the nineteenth-century expansion of colonial rule over the Muslim world, the critique of Muslim beliefs, history and laws by Christian missionaries and administrators, and claims that modernisation equalled Westernisation. The chapter identifies three reform discourses that were in mutual interaction: revivalist, modernist and Islamic modernist.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan was the first to claim that the perceived conflict between science and religion was an artefact of the epistemology developed by classical theology; he stressed the need for a new theology (*jadid 'ilm al-kalam*). He explained that, in Islamic tradition, classical theology was developed as a methodology to respond to challenges posed by the Greek sciences. Itself based on Greek speculative thought, epistemology and ontology, classical theology cannot appreciate the empirical methods of modern science. The challenges posed by modern science called for a new theology. Khan rejected the idea that modern science contradicted the scriptures. The laws of nature discovered by the modern sciences are the work of God. They cannot, therefore, contradict scriptures, which are the word of God. A number of other Islamic modernists have underscored the need for a new theology to review classical epistemology and ontology.

Three phases may be distinguished in the development of Islamic modernism (to be named simply origins, growth and end), in which Islamic modernists perceived modernity differently and accordingly offered different arguments in support of the compatibility of Islam and modernity. In the first phase, the focus was on the natural sciences and the Qur'an, in the second phase on nationalism and the universal caliphate, identity and autonomy of the self, and in the third phase on the social sciences and human rights. In the last phase, Islamic modernism was rigorously challenged by the quest for authenticity, which characterised this trend as Westernisation. This hastened the end of Islamic modernism, as most modernists and scholars of modern Muslim societies already believed that modernity was Western and Islamic modernists were merely apologists.

Questions

1. Generally, *fiqh* has been considered as the most fundamental of the Islamic sciences. Why did Islamic modernists focus on *kalam* rather than *fiqh*?
2. How important is the discourse on shari'a in contemporary Muslim societies? Is it a limited discourse focused on legal matters or does it signify the comprehensive concept of religion in modern Islam?
3. Who speaks for Islam? How accurate is it to say that the traditional ulama separate politics from religion?
4. Afghani's strong criticism of Khan is described sometimes as reflecting a broader and more general divide between political modernists and Islamic modernists. Is it

possible to describe either of them as purely political or Islamic modernist? What were the primary objectives of both types of (Muslim) modernists? Can the same or a similar opposition be perceived today?

5. How has the Muslim perception of modernity changed during the three phases of Islamic modernism identified in the chapter? How diverse is the movement for Islamic modernism in contemporary Muslim societies?
6. From an analysis of the political discourse by the Islamic modernists on constitutionalism, caliphate and Islamic state, what is the significance of the contemporary debates on caliphate?
7. Can Islamic modernism be described in terms of a pan-Islamic movement? Which ideas first formulated by Iqbal were developed further by Iranian thinkers? How can one explain this development?
8. Why does the author speak of the end of Islamic modernism? What has replaced (or suppressed) it?
9. In what sense is the movement for the Islamisation of knowledge a quest for authenticity? Is this quest a search for compatibility of modern sciences with Islam, as claimed by the Islamic modernists, or is it the rejection of this claim?

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CHAPTER 10

The Shifting Politics of Identity

Abdulkader Tayob

Introduction

The Six Day War of 1967 marked a turning point in the modern history of Islam. In a matter of a few days, the Israeli army devastated the armies of both Egypt and Syria, and with it the hopes and visions of Arab nationalism and socialism. Many Muslims, particularly Arabs who had pinned their hopes on the newly independent states, began a slow and inexorable turn to the past. The heritage (*turath*) of Islam, Islamic history and Islamic civilisation became a source, a refuge and a solace of the authentic self that would save the Arab Muslim from the humiliation of the present, and point towards a brighter future. Another equally strong sign came approximately six years later when Arab governments in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) decided to use oil as a weapon against the United States of America and its allies for unconditionally supporting Israel (Stork 1974; Korany 1984). Notwithstanding the political complexity of the oil weapon in relation to inter-Arab conflict between conservative and radical regimes, this too became a significant sign of Islam's new visibility. It signalled to the world, and to Muslims even more so, that the economic resources of Muslim countries could be marshalled to secure an honourable place in the contemporary world. Another six years later, and with the fall of the Shah of Iran, there no longer remained any doubt that Muslim identities would play a significant role in the political landscape. It was the Iranian Revolution, in particular, that sent the strongest signal of all that Islam was going to play a significant role in politics. Symbols of identity dominated developments in the economic and political spheres, but personal constructions of identities were also under way in the choice of dress codes, art, education and, of course, religious devotion. The political and economic events sometimes obscured the less dramatic turn towards identity on an individual, personal level. Identity in all its dimensions became a significant feature of Muslim individuals and societies.

Muslim identities may be compared and contrasted with related developments in other parts of the world and in different historical and cultural contexts. If we cast our view to developments in Europe and the United States in the 1960s, we discover a comparable basis for thinking about Muslim identities. The events of 1968 first in Paris and then in other parts of the Western world

marked a turning point in the development of personal identity and notions of the self. These events also coincided with a sense of disillusionment in established authority and ideologies that promised future utopias (Wallerstein 2003). The study of identities and identity politics in these countries occupied a central role in the social sciences and humanities. In particular, theories of deconstruction and postmodernism indicated the situational and constructed nature of identities. The imagined nature of national and other primordial identities was exposed, and their fragile and constructed dimensions were highlighted (Zygmunt Bauman 1996; Gerd Baumann 1999). Taking due cognisance of differences in politics, culture and global location between Europe, the Americas and Muslim societies, some important bases can be identified for providing insights from the one to shed light on the other.

Taking a cue from postmodernism and deconstruction, this chapter explores the constructivist nature of modern Islamic identities. The focus of the chapter rests on specifically religious identities, keeping in mind that Muslims at any given time also share identities in relation to class, nationality, ethnic origin and gender. Islamic identities as religious identities cannot be completely detached from their cultural and historical contexts. Religious identities, even if they are self-consciously related to primordial and timeless dimensions, can and must be situated. And in this way, they become sometimes indistinguishable from these other 'more secular' identities of individuals and groups. The multi-dimensional nature of identities is taken for granted here, but the complexity of the religious identities is further examined in closer detail. This chapter explores religious identities, and applies to them the insights of deconstruction.

Two theoretical foundations are employed to introduce the constructed nature of modern Muslim identities. The first comes from the highly acclaimed Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, and the second from the reflections of Frantz Fanon. Taylor elaborated on the constructive nature of identities, produced through dialogues with the past and the present. At the same time, he argued that Western identity was not completely adrift without any specific direction or content. He tried to chart a middle course between those who argued that identities were given and primordial, and those who were merely interested in pointing to their arbitrary construction (Taylor 1989, 1991, 1992; Abbey 2000). One of Taylor's important insights about modern identities that he emphasised, and that is often forgotten, was its foundation in the birth of modernity and the Enlightenment tradition. According to him, the notion of identity cannot be separated from the emergence of a modern, egalitarian state. Identity became important when the state left behind a status-based system for the different classes to which an individual belonged. Among the intellectuals of the French Revolution, Taylor (1992: 49) recalled Rousseau as the one who unconditionally rejected the honour system of the *ancien régime*, to be replaced by

the notions of esteem and dignity. In his social contract, Rousseau ([1762] 1976: 268) emphasised the legal and political equality of citizens:

> I shall end this chapter and this book by remarking on a fact on which the whole social system should rest: i.e., that, instead of destroying natural inequality, the fundamental compact substitutes, for such physical inequality as nature may have set up between men, an equality that is moral and legitimate, and that men, who may be unequal in strength or intelligence, become every one equal by convention and legal right.

The exclusion of status, or any 'natural inequality' from the public, was the founding event of modern identity. Taylor (1991: 28) believed that Rousseau and other European philosophers like Herder substituted inherited, given identities of the pre-Enlightenment period for identities based on the dignity and personality of each individual (Taylor 1991: 28). The status of a person as a serf or a noble must be overcome, and, if need be, dissimulated and hidden, in order to participate in an egalitarian society. But what was acquired in place of status was a sense of self-worth and dignity. There seemed to be a tension between the identification of dignity as a process through which one asserted oneself, and the dissimulation of the 'natural inequalities' of people in an egalitarian society. Both self-assertion and dissimulation were equally important for participating in an egalitarian society. Without dissimulation, one could not speak of a truly democratic process. But each citizen also had the task of developing a sense of the self that would participate in this polity. In the late-twentieth-century politics of identity, Taylor tried to recover such an aspect of identity for the multicultural societies in Canada where he lived, and for those countries that regarded themselves as inheritors of the legacy of the Enlightenment. The various cultures in such societies represented the 'natural inequalities' that had to be recognised, on the one hand, but balanced against the demands of egalitarianism (free speech, equality and freedom) on the other (Taylor 1991). The successful future of multiculturalism rested on the balance between recognition and dissimulation.

Taylor's insights are not sufficient to study the construction of modern Muslim identities that emerged in the shadow of imperialism and capitalism. The modern egalitarian states came to the shores of Africa, the Americas and Asia in very different ways from the manner in which they were developed in Europe. They were accompanied by Europeans who were ruthless in their search for raw materials, brutal in their aims to control trade routes even against other European states, passionate to convert people to one form of Christianity or another, and arrogant in their proclamation that humanism was a special gift of Europe to the rest of the world. Napoleon Bonaparte occupied Egypt in 1798 in order to convey the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity to the Egyptians. Such ironies abounded in the history of modern, colonial states. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that identities in the colonies were created and constructed

from some of the values that Taylor recalls in his discussion of identity. Dealing with these different contexts, Franz Fanon helps us navigate the treacherous waters of identity construction in the colonies. Fanon based his own understanding of the self on the grounds of the Enlightenment tradition, but suggested some significant ways of thinking about identity in the light of colonialism and powerlessness. Fanon referred to the double critique in play in the construction of the identity of the colonised; the first directed at traditional society, and the second at the coloniser (Bhabha 1986). Fanon (1986: 16) pointed to the extremely difficult project that such an identity construction faced:

> The educated Negro, slave of the spontaneous and cosmic Negro myth, feels at a given stage that his race no longer understands him. Or that he no longer understands it. Then he congratulates himself on this, and enlarging the difference, the incomprehension, the disharmony, he finds in them the meaning of his real humanity, or more rarely he wants to belong to his people.

Identities in the colonies had to be fashioned out of the critique of both self and other.[1] Fanon's insights on identity help us appreciate the identity constructions of Muslims on the periphery, in contexts of political domination and deprivation. Taylor and Fanon, then, provide a useful foundation for the modern location of identity construction, its dialogical production and its engagement in multiple critiques.

Even though Muslim identities have become prominent since 1967, we have to begin with the origins of the modern state in various Muslim societies in the second half of the nineteenth century. Voll provides a useful typology on which to map the interaction between Muslim and modernity, and the distinctive 'styles of action' that were generated. With some variation, this pattern has been used by many other scholars. In his extensive review of Islamic history, Voll (1982a: 29–30) identified four 'styles of action' in Muslim society: adaptationists, conservationists, fundamentalists and individualists. Voll does not restrict these styles to the modern period, but applies them to all of Islamic history. In this chapter, I will focus on their reinvention in the context of the nineteenth century, when Muslim territories came under the direct control of European powers. Voll's adaptationists will be called reformists in this paper, and fundamentalists will be called Islamists. Together with traditionalists, they have set the framework for identities in the modern world.

The three styles of action provide the patterns and the choices on which identities have been constructed in various sites. They were already clearly articulated before the 1960s and 1970s, when the turn to identities on a global scale became evident. In this regard, the post-1967 period provided an opportunity to create the self and the other out of the many possibilities presented by these early modern styles. Rather than examining reformists, Islamists and traditionalists as distinct movements or social groups, I want to suggest that we see their

earlier formulations as tropes and themes for individuals, states and societies who appropriated them after 1967. We need first to return to these styles and their creators in order to recognise the identity implications they hold. Each of these styles has bequeathed an important resource to modern Muslim societies. A careful analysis of the significance of the self in these styles and responses will illustrate the meaning of modern identities.

Muslim reform (*islah*)

Muslim reformists, also often called modernists, were engaged directly with the challenges of modernity. Muhammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905), one of the leading protagonists, called his project *islah* (reform) and in one essay associated it with the Protestant Reformation (ʿAbduh 1989: 77). Here we can see a slight intimation of the significant change that he may have seen in modernisation. ʿAbduh argued that the path of modernisation could be taken only when Muslims returned to the original teachings of Islam. Such a position would overlap with notions of *tajdid*, of reminding the Muslim *umma* of returning to the model of early Islamic society. But, by making a comparison with the Protestant Reformation, he was perhaps also suggesting a uniqueness to the demands of the new age. In this chapter, I will use the case of the reformists as an attestation that people like ʿAbduh drew from the earlier *tajdid* (renewal) traditions of Islam, as well as advocating reforms in response to modernity.

Nineteenth-century reformers were varied in their approach to modernity, often being intensely critical of each other. For example, two of the leading exponents of the time, Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, had very different political goals. Khan saw the British Empire as the guardian of Muslim interests in the Indian subcontinent, while al-Afghani was a paragon of anti-imperialism and pan-Islam. On an intellectual level, al-Afghani wrote an extensive pamphlet against Khan (Keddie 1983). Khan's followers in India were inspired by his ideas on reform while rejecting some of his daring modernisms in the translation of the Qur'an (Rahman 1958; Ahmad 1967: 112). Even though ʿAbduh was directly inspired by al-Afghani, he took a very different political approach towards the British. Joining al-Afghani's anti-imperialism at first, he later adopted a more conciliatory approach and became a protégé of the British interests in Egypt (Hourani 1962: 158–9; Asad 2001: 9).

In spite of these differences, however, the reformists were promoting some aspect of universalism that they shared with each other and with the colonisers. Secondly, and flowing from this universalism, they also held in common a critical attitude to the inherited traditions of Islam. This was the first critical movement in the construction of modern Muslim identity. It was an articulation of universalism that emerged from a critique of existing Muslim state and society. And the universalism matched aspects that colonialists brought to these

societies. At the same time, though, they were all at least wary of the colonial occupiers. Some were more vociferously critical than others. This second critique led them to an affirmation of the particular Islamic culture to which they belonged. Often, the two critical movements contradicted each other. The universalism that they promoted in the first movement was undermined by the particularism of the second movement. Matching this double critique was the dilemma of Islamic reformism. I will illustrate this critique in some detail through the work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–98) was a leading modernist thinker in British colonial India who articulated a universal interpretation of Islam, on the one hand, and made a clear case for the specially protected place of Muslims, on the other. After the Indian Revolt of 1857, he was one of the few Muslim leaders to advocate support for the British. In the context of a Hindu majority, he was of the opinion that the British monarchy could guarantee the survival and modernisation of Muslim communities. Until his death in 1898, he held tightly to a loyalist approach to the British colonial presence in India, and encouraged Muslims to take advantage of the new trends in science and education. He left a legacy in politics and education that flourished in the Indian subcontinent and beyond.

Khan wrote widely on many topics, and his understanding of Islam as a natural system is a fundamental principle of his modernist approach. He argued that a new theology was needed in the nineteenth century to prevent educated Muslims from losing faith in their religion. This was a critical challenge to Muslims in general, and religious scholars in particular. He was convinced that Islam needed to be justified anew on the basis of reason and experimental observation. He argued the need for continuous revision and the indispensable role of rational vigilance:

> Yet, surely, when the style of philosophy changes, the principles of debate change, and there arises the need for new argument. For this reason the arguments formerly set up by our elders have lost their relevance in our time. (quoted in Troll 1978: 325)
>
> Only if reason is used constantly can the error of the reason of one person be corrected by the reason of a second person and the reasonings of one period by the reasonings of a second. (ibid.: 255)

And it comes as no surprise to know that he found reason and Islam in complete harmony with each other: 'when I found Islam to be in full correspondence with reason I became even more convinced and certain that Islam is true and this doctrine (that reason has nothing to do with faith and religion) wrong' (Troll 1978: 257).

Khan was drawing on the rational approaches to Islam in the past, but insisted that the new experimental sciences posed new challenges. Keeping in mind the success and promise of science in the nineteenth century, he added

a new dimension to the meaning of Islam. According to Khan, the essence of Islam was compatible with nature and natural laws. The proof of a religion ought to be based on its 'correspondence with the natural disposition of man, or with nature' (*fitrat-i insani ya nechar ke mutabiq*) (ibid.: 316). For Khan, the word and work of God, which were considered then in the nineteenth century to be scripture and nature respectively, could not be in conflict with each other: 'it would be highly irrational to maintain that God's work (*fi'l*) and God's word (*qawl*) are different and unrelated to one another' (ibid.: 317).

Khan's formulation of Islam as nature had direct implications for modern Muslim identity. It held a fundamental critique of the existing traditions of Islam. This critique included the theological foundations of Islamic belief that stretched over a thousand years. With this critique Islam was established on a new foundation that made it indistinguishable from nature. The naturalism of Khan was a form of universalism that he claimed for Islam. This was intended not only to prove the superiority of Islam, but to posit the equivalence between Islam and a universal order. There was a direct political relevance for this transformation. The new universalism was promoted and embodied by the political order that the British colonial regime brought to India. In this sense, Khan's project declared that Islam was compatible with the science and civilisation that colonialism brought. Khan and his followers did not argue for a universal Islamic political regime against the British Raj. His was a declaration that bound Islam to the criteria and judgement of universal nature. The Muslims addressed by Khan could feel that Islam was part of a universal vision corresponding to nature and harmony.

But if such was the universal aspect of nineteenth-century Muslim identity, there was another element in his politics. Khan clearly championed the interests of elite Muslims in this new political order, from which he believed they had not yet benefited. He criticised Muslims for failing to take advantage of the new schooling opportunities, and for resting on the laurels of their former glory. But, more importantly, he never tired of reminding the British of their responsibilities. He believed that it was the responsibility of the new rulers to respond to the needs of the different religious groups. In a book written specifically for the British colonial regime after the 1857 revolt, Khan (2000: 46) characterised the art of politics in the following manner:

> The only real kingdom is that of the Almighty who created the world. He however, made the kings of this world as a type of what he Himself is in his order that man on seeing his sovereign, should recollect that there is the still greater one than him. For this reason many wise and able men have laid down the good qualities of the Almighty, such as bounty, kindness, etc., should also be found represented in earthly Kings, hence the title 'Shadow of God'. It is therefore, incumbent on earthly kings to treat their subjects with that bountiful liberality with which the Almighty has treated the whole world.

It is clear from the quotation above that this is neither a modern nor a revolutionary perspective of government. It set down a framework for the generosity that Khan expected from the new rulers. For Khan, this meant that the British colonial authorities had to recognise the special needs and interests of Muslims (and also Hindus) in the new order. So, also in this text, Khan (2000: 22, 44–5, 51) demanded non-interference in religious matters, special consideration for employment in government service and separate cooks for Muslims and Hindus in the military regiments. It would appear that what I refer to as criticism seems mild in the context of colonialism and the economic control of India's resources. But the substantial argument presented here is that Khan expected particular rights for religious groups from the British. In the framework of a critique of British policy, Khan demanded very narrowly defined religious rights.

Khan's ideas implied a construction of Muslim identity in the British colonial order that took two distinct forms. On the one hand, Islam as universal and indistinguishable from the natural order posited a framework for a new politics, and a new basis of human society. Personified in science, the new natural identity of Islam may be regarded as a submergence (even dissimulation) of the Muslim identity within the new universal order led by the British colonial rulers. This universal identity emerged in a critique of the existing Muslim society and its history of theology and Qur'an commentary. Such a legacy could not claim a special place in this universal framework unless it was transformed. But, within this universal political order, Khan made a claim against the British as well. And this claim was formulated in favour of Muslim interests that were very narrowly defined. The second critique, again directed at the British, supported Muslim identities in their most particular forms (food and ritual requirements). But this critique supported a distinctively personal Muslim identity within a universal framework. And the two movements were not reconciled in any way. The critique of the Muslims was balanced uncomfortably with the critique of the British.

Other reformist Muslim intellectuals appearing at the end of the nineteenth century produced similar possibilities for identities. The political contexts of these countries varied considerably, and thus the double critical movements against the local traditions, and against colonial political practices, were not exactly the same in Iran, Egypt, Tunisia and Nigeria, as they were in India. But the primacy of reason among the modernists promoted a bid for universalism. Islam was a universal order that Muslims should embrace, with the implication that they participate fully in the new political projects as equals with the colonialists and other groups. At the same time, in their critique of the colonising other, the Muslim modernists restored the Muslim in his and her uniqueness. Usually, this implied that Muslims drew their inspiration from the very sources and histories that were unsettled and undermined in the first movement. The double, often contradictory, projects were bequeathed to the Islamists, who in turn followed in their steps.

Islamism

Islamists are more clearly known for supporting a completely particularistic approach to Islam. They presented Islam as a unique system, a way of life that is absolutely singular and distinct from any other form of government, social life or religious persuasion. As a political ideology, Islamism seems to make no space for a universalism of the type that Khan and other reformist Muslims were seen to be struggling with. Islamists seem not to be concerned about attempting to represent Islam as embodying universal values. The question that needs to be asked is whether they make any concessions to universalism. Do they allow any door to remain open for a shared debate where a universal articulation of Islamic identity is open to the other? Islamist identity is dependent on modernist identity in an unmistakable manner. But it attempts to collapse the particular and the universal into individualist subjectivity, which provides the ground sometimes for religious nationalism, sometimes for highly individualist projects of piety and politics (Roy 1994; Van der Veer 1994). This construction, in varying degrees, can be traced in the work of prominent Islamist intellectuals of the twentieth century like Hasan al-Banna (1906–49), Abu al-A'la Mawdudi (1903–79) and Sayyid Qutb (1906–66). In order to maintain continuity with Khan, I will focus on Mawdudi in this chapter.

Mawdudi is recognised as the most prolific and consistent source for Islamists. His biographer, Seyyid Vali Nasr (1994), has pointed out that he was certainly familiar with the modernist writings of the Indian subcontinent. Traces of these ideas are clearly present in his earlier writings, and hardly ever disappear. I will go one step further and claim that Mawdudi's particular approach to Muslim identity was entirely elaborated from a fundamental thesis in Khan. From Khan, he obtained a universal foundation for identity. His internal critique is also initially directed at the history of Muslims. Eventually, however, the second critique was directed at the self, which must balance the universal and the particular within a subjective conception. The second critical movement and its resolution cannot be ignored when addressing the meaning of modern Islamic identities.

Mawdudi wrote a small pamphlet in 1932 entitled *Risala Diniyyat*, which has been translated into many languages. In a preface to the second edition, Mawdudi (1982) characterised the book as an explanation of the 'rational basis of belief'. Reflections on this Islamic rationality were further elaborated upon in his sermons (*Khutubat*), presented in 1940 and also translated into many different languages (Mawdudi 1985: 14). The first English translation of this book appeared in 1975 as *The Fundamentals of Islam*, and was later retranslated as *Let Us Be Muslims* in 1985. Both these books provide us with interesting material to identify his approach to identity. In *Risala Diniyyat*, Mawdudi begins with the familiar theme of the pervasiveness of laws that govern all reality. Human beings

should follow suit, but face a dilemma because of their dual nature: 'Like other creatures, he is completely caught in the grip of the physical laws of nature and is bound to follow them. But there is another sphere of his activity. He has been endowed with reason and intellect . . .' (Mawdudi 1982: 23). Mawdudi does not exploit this difference to map a different ontological foundation for humanity, nor does he explore a new understanding of Islam on the basis of reason like Khan. He does not even reflect on the extensive history of reconciliation between reason and revelation in the history of Islamic thought. For Mawdudi, the consistency and immutability of the laws of nature offer a framework for thinking about the laws of the *shari'a*. He presents the laws of God as the immutable laws of nature. When a Muslim fully submits to these, he or she achieves a sense of completeness: 'He has now consciously submitted to Him Whom he had already been unconsciously obeying' (Mawdudi 1982: 24). And it follows logically that disbelief is a denial of one's true nature: 'The man who denies God is called *kafir* (concealer) because he conceals by his disbelief what is inherent in his nature and embalmed in his soul – for his nature is instinctively imbued with "Islam"' (Mawdudi 1982: 25). Mawdudi then deals with verses from the Qur'an that indicate that religious laws are subject to change. This poses a dilemma for Mawdudi, who has posited a theory in which the fixed laws of nature provide a template for the supposedly fixed laws of the *shari'a*. He avoids the implications of the Qur'anic verses by turning to an evolutionary thesis. Humankind had required different laws during its primitive stage, but 'more than two thousand years ago mankind had reached such a mental awareness that it seemed to be craving for a universal religion' (Mawdudi 1982: 57–9). This 'craving' gave rise to the emergence of Buddhism, Christianity and finally Islam. The latter has a special place among the other Axial religions, since Islam now emerged 'in the form of a complete and fully-fledged system, covering all aspects of the life of man' (Mawdudi 1982: 57–9).[2] With Islam situated on the centre stage of history, Mawdudi (1985: 130, 132) had a neat solution for the different forms of *shari'a* that pre-dated the seventh century. With this significant transformation, Mawdudi posited the Islamic system to be fully synchronised with the system of nature. He assumed fixed laws of nature, and thus fixed laws (a code) for human society. Mawdudi's concept of human nature posited a universality whereby Islam became a natural rule for human society. In this view, human beings had no choice but to become Muslims. Refusing to become Muslim would be a rejection of their natural and essential selves. This is the rationalism that he claims for the book, which is the universality that he presents for a political project. In opposition to the reformists who identified a universality that Islam shared with the standards of modern culture and philosophy, Mawdudi presented Islam as universal in its totality.

Mawdudi and other Islamists clearly relied on the prestige both of modern science and of some of its nineteenth-century theses to postulate the universality

of Islam in the modern world. This universality was an assertion that Islam in all its details matched the claims of science and the West.

The Islamist construction also included a critique of the self, a critique of Muslims. Not surprisingly, this critique was preoccupied with the intense diversity of and conflict over Islam within Muslim societies. Such diversity undermined the harmonious totality that Mawdudi claimed for Islam in his vision. Mawdudi seemed to have attempted two possible ways of resolving the dilemma that his universal framework brought forth. The first approach was a modernist approach, albeit directed in a moralist direction. In a highly controversial and popular book on the history of Islam, *Khilafat awr Mulukiyyat*, Mawdudi questioned the role of some of the closest companions of the Prophet, all revered by Sunni Muslims as the paragons of virtue and correct Islamic practice.[3] Their moral choices had undermined the universality of Islam. Apart from this historical critique, Mawdudi can also be credited for developing a different resolution. And this solution, which focused even more on a subjective resolution, seems to have greater acceptance among Muslims. Mawdudi urged Muslims to develop a conviction that would resolve these differences. He further argued that 'each one of us will be following his respective method in full consciousness of the fact that it was followed by the Prophet . . . And that we have the evidence to support this claim' (Mawdudi 1985: 132). The gap between a diverse reality within Islam and a conviction that Islam was a natural system in conformity with the laws of nature could be resolved only in a highly selective *conceptualisation* of the past.[4] Mawdudi advanced a vision as a means to resolve a conflict between a system for human nature, and human frailty and doubt. In both cases, we might say, the contradiction was resolved by resorting to subjectivity within the individual.[5] The reconciliation between one's own ineptitude, and a global vision of a divine natural order, was finally resolved within the subjective self.

The support for subjectivity was complicated by another equally fundamental argument in the Islamist vision. Like other Muslim scholars, Mawdudi believed that human beings could not be trusted to determine universal values on their own. In an equally influential pamphlet on the political theory of Islam, Mawdudi (1976: 162) wrote that human beings could not be trusted to know their own states and conditions. Legislation guided by human rationality was doomed to lead both to individual and social chaos, and to destruction. Humans could not develop or suggest the limits and contours of the Islamic state and the Islamic method. Only God and the Prophet could save human beings from this destructive course. Only God and the Prophet knew the truth about human life on earth, and only they knew what was good and evil. This particular position does not differ much from the traditional Ashʿarite position of Islamic theology. It underlines the belief that good and evil cannot be produced by human initiative. God had assigned such values that human beings cannot perceive in their entirety. But there was something new in the formulations of Mawdudi.

He claimed that the system was natural in its cosmic and human sense. He expected Muslims to apprehend this overall vision of universality and totality. The irony is that the universality of Islam drew its strength from the universals of science, and the particular details were provided by the particulars in the Islamic legacy.

The implication for identity construction is clear when we see the continuity and discontinuity between reformist and Islamist approaches. The Islamists depended on a universalistic construction of identity by claiming the rationality and naturalness of Islam on one level. To this extent, the modern inspiration of their constructions was derived from the reformers. But they also invested the particulars with a universality that the reformists, positing the universal on a different level, wanted to change. Reformists embraced some aspects of historical change, but Islamists demanded a full vision of history, at least from the time of the Prophet Muhammad, that admitted no difference. Taking this position meant that the reformists had to embark on a critique of existing Muslim society and its past, while the Islamists resorted to a moral and subjective solution. The Islamist solution for identity expected believers to comprehend Islam as a natural system in its entirety. This conviction had to be grasped in Mawdudi's case, at least, in a mystical union with the Prophet (Adams 1976; Brown 1996). But the individual was really trapped, since the scheme was confined to a total vision. There was no redefinition of Islam that matched the way that individuals would concede or strip away in order to be part of a broader society. The natural order of Islam, as articulated by Mawdudi, was highly particularistic in detail. The subjective comprehension was invested with the burden of persuading the believer to see this naturalism and this order in their minute details. In general, this absoluteness has correctly been criticised for the totalitarianism that it promised.

Traditionalism

The traditionalists' position needs equal attention in order to make sense of the sources of modern Muslim identities. A number of studies have pointed to the varied reaction of the ulama towards change and modernisation (Keddie 1972; Green 1976; Gilsenan 1990; Zubaida 1990). Careful attention to detail has yielded insights into the subtle changes introduced in the traditionalist frameworks. In spite of these differences, however, one can safely say that the majority of the ulama could not see any valuable outcomes for Islam in the changes proposed by colonial authorities, by Muslim reformers and by Islamists. From the reforms that were attempted by eighteenth-century Ottoman Sultans to British reforms in India, the ulama developed a rejectionist approach to innovation**.** They were particularly vehement against religious innovations, but were most often wary of changing formal aspects of everyday life as well. Theirs is

a vision of past historical completeness and contemporary decadence. Thus, scholars debated on the introduction of the radio, loudspeakers and other technologies into the societies in general, and into religious practices in particular. A more careful examination of their arguments on these issues will highlight their approach, and their contribution to identity. Below, an examination of a prominent religious scholar in Pakistan will present the alternative to reformists and Islamists.

Mufti Muhammad Shafi' (1897–1976) was one of the leading scholars of Deoband of South Asia. The first such school was founded in 1867 in the town of Deoband in the aftermath of the Indian Mutiny (1857) when the British took full control of India. The scholars of Deoband founded the school to preserve and propagate the teachings of Islam in this new political climate. The model of Deoband was quickly duplicated in other towns and villages throughout India. Metcalf's studies have left us with great insights into the history and political impact of the Deoband. She has identified it with religious revivalism, in contrast with even more traditionalist approaches in India. In this sense, one might think of Deobandi revivalism as a form of *tajdid*, which self-consciously keeps modernity at bay, but engages in a renewal modelled on earlier Islamic patterns. Deobandi revivalism, however, was not resistant to all changes. Metcalf (1978, 1982, 1995) has shown how the school was open to institutional and organisational changes, which helped it to thrive in the modern contexts. But traditionalists keep themselves aloof from the kind of reformist approaches that I have discussed, as well as from the modernist references that mark Islamist discourses.

Mufti Muhammad Shafi' moved to Pakistan immediately after partition. He established a Dar al-'Ulum in Karachi, and played a leading role in the early discussions on the Pakistani state. He has written extensively on a variety of issues, and is the author of a voluminous commentary on the Qur'an. A review of several key *fatwas* on some crucial aspects of modern societies illustrates the value of his ideas for identity. The Deoband approach included a grave resistance to change and innovation, and Mufti Shafi''s *fatwa* on the introduction of technology in Islamic ritual helps to clarify this point. He was asked if the installation and use of loudspeakers in mosques for the call to prayer, sermons, recitation of the Qur'an and the prayer worship (*salat*) were permissible. In his response, the mufti distinguished between a religious obligation and its particular form. Sometimes, he asserted, the form was indistinguishable from the obligation. While he admitted that some formal changes could be acceptable for certain religious obligations, the introduction of a loudspeaker into mosques and into the various forms of daily worship would not be one of them. Through a carefully crafted argument, in which he weighed the benefits and injuries of using technologically amplified sound, he eventually cautioned against its use. His main argument was that Islamic practice should remain simple, unencumbered

by the trappings of sophisticated instruments, though, as he was quick to point out, he was not opposed to technological innovation itself. In his view, modern technological innovations were not any different from the scientific achievements of medieval times. Similar instruments, and here he mentioned the instruments of astronomy, could have been introduced to Muslim societies before modernisation (Shafiʿ 1963). They were available then as they are available now. For the practice of Islam, they were then rejected and thus paved the way for how modern Muslims should address the new inventions. In this response, there is a strong argument against the special nature of modernity and its technology. Mufti Shafiʿ's cautious rejection of technological tools illustrates his rootedness in the traditions of the past. But it also shows his domestication of this new modernity in the world of traditional Islam, a critique in its own right.

A further point of interest in his discourse is his understanding of the past and the present, and their implications for identity. In another *fatwa*, the Mufti is asked if Muslims were duty bound to follow one particular *madhhab* (school of jurisprudence) to the exclusion of others. Given that they were all acceptable, should not Muslims be permitted to follow any school, and should they not be permitted to follow one in one issue, and another in some other issues. Mufti Shafiʿ, in agreement with the Deobandi position, believed that Muslims should not be free to decide for themselves. The first step in his response is to assert that *taqlid* was a requirement for those who were not experts in the sciences of Islam. To this end, he cites the Qur'an and hadith proof-texts in support. Having done this, he is confident in having narrowed down the question to the problem of *taqlid* within a specific school. He concedes that a general commitment to recognised juristic authorities was already evident in the early years of Islam. Muslims then did not confine themselves to a particular teacher or school. However, after the first 300 years, when conditions had worsened, the ulama forbade ordinary lay Muslims (ʿ*amma*) from following the advice of multiple authorities. The reason for this, he says, was that individuals had begun consulting the jurists for opinions in order to satisfy their own individual whims (*hawa*). When this happened, the scholars prohibited lay persons from following multiple juridical authorities. He does not provide substantial support for these historical statements, but bases his argument on a combination of divine historical destiny and probabilities. It is a fact, a divine blessing according to Mufti Shafiʿ, that Sunni Muslims have held on to the four juridical schools. And it is also a fact that no other schools have emerged. Apart from these historical sweeps, it is interesting to note how the fear of personal whim and caprice (*hawa*) occupies his argumentation. The ordinary lay Muslim must hold firmly to the doctrines of his or her juristic school. The earlier venerable scholars of the past had cautioned Muslims to avoid the slippery slopes of personal whim and caprice. With his focus on this personal confrontation and fear, Mufti Shafiʿ removes all other conditions from history such as power, rationalism and the encounters with

foreign cultures and civilisation. More importantly, he also eliminates the rich complexity of the history of juristic thought that dealt with these difficulties. A personal piety centred on the fear of God dominates the *fatawa* of the Deoband school (Moosagie 1995).

Traditionalists stand apart from reformists and Islamists in their disregard for modernity and the political projects associated with it. Mufti Shafiʿ's attitude towards technology is symbolic not simply of a rejection, but of a certain level of contempt towards those who proclaim the great inventions of science and technology. But traditionalists are also distinct from Islamists who want to translate the values of Islam onto modern politics. By appealing to the naturalness of Islam, Mawdudi wants to extend his appeal to standards and measures outside the tradition. Mufti Shafiʿ, on the other hand, is consistent. What is interesting is his juridical view on the Jamaat-i Islami, which he criticises for the disparaging attitude that its members display towards the early Muslims. He singles out Mawdudi's book *Khilafat awr Mulukiyyat* for special mention, because of its views on the early generation of Muslims, particularly the companions of the Prophet. I see not only a fidelity to the past, but also a critical attitude towards the modern political project of the Islamic state. This does not mean that the ulama were not interested in the state and its laws. Mufti Shafiʿ himself was engaged in extensive discussions on the early state of Pakistan, but he seemed hardly interested in either the modernist state of the founders of Pakistan, or the Islamist state of Mawdudi. In his response, the Mufti also reveals a keen awareness of reformist arguments that one may apply juristic deductive reasoning (*ijtihad*) to modern conditions. This would suit well the reformist approach to permit the introduction of new forms and approaches in the light of a broader universalist project. Mufti Shafiʿ's position is that, not only should *ijtihad* be avoided, but also in doing so Muslims should be committed to focusing on one dimension of personal belief and piety. For the sake of the self, Muslims are bound faithfully to adhere to one juristic school. And any attempt to break this tradition would open the floodgates of individual passions, whims and caprice, and would inevitably lead to the destruction of religion.

Reformists, Islamists and traditionalists vary immensely in their approaches to particular issues and positions. And further nuances can be detected within their ranks. Taken as a broad style of action in Voll's sense, however, their distinctive approaches to Islam can shed light on identity constructions in the modern world. The 'styles of action' were developed in relation to the reality of modernity and colonialism. The modernists/reformists were closest in illustrating the tension between the universal and the particular that Islam could offer to modern Muslims. The Islamists collapsed the distinction between the universal and the particular, but embraced the universal that modernity presented. The contradiction that this solution produced was to be resolved in an existentialist leap. And the traditionalists seemed to ignore the modern, content with warning

both modernists/reformists and Islamists on different registers that they were leading Muslims to chaos. But, in doing so, they also destroyed the complexity of this history. Fixated on the fear of the individual's propensity to slide into moral chaos, they closed the door to finding opportunities for the present that the past could offer.

Constructed Islamic identities in late modernity

These styles of action offer a rich source for modern Islamic identities. In the second half of the twentieth century, they presented the possibilities and patterns for the employment of Muslim identities in different terrains and contexts. In the remaining part of this chapter, I wish to illustrate at least some of these varying fields in which Islamic identities after 1967 have been constructed. The first example will be on the level of the modern state; the second on individual dress; and the third on the level of radical Islam in the globalised world after the end of the cold war. Each of these demonstrates the possibilities of identities that present themselves to different actors. The different styles are not narrowly restricted to consistent application. The three styles of action intersect in their employment in the state, dress code or radical protest. As Muslims draw on the authenticity of Islam to put forward these senses of self, they invariably draw on variations of these styles of action.

The role of Islam in politics is often associated with Islamist movements. Thus, the rise of Islamist movements is often dependent on the failure of secular Muslim states to deliver on their promises given at independence. Esposito and Burgat have led a scholarly analysis that focused on this clash between Islamic and secular conceptions of the modern Muslim state. The Islamist opposition movements promised the electorate a return to the foundational principles of Islamic politics. On the basis of Islamic law, ethics, economics and social development, all the problems of the modern states would be solved. On the other hand, the existing states are characterised in this analysis by their allegiance, intellectually and politically, to the essentially secular nature of the modern state. They are intellectually indebted to their foreign supporters, and they are politically tied to the fortunes of these foreign international games (Esposito 2000; Burgat 2003).

Religious identity politics, however, is not the preserve of Islamist opposition. More specifically, it does not only take the form of an Islamist style of action. 'Secular' Muslim states have also turned to Muslim identity in different terrains. At independence, it was natural that some of these states like Algeria, Egypt and Indonesia, to name the most obvious, would claim the foundation of the new states on the basis of indigenous cultures. And Islam was considered an important, if not always the dominant part, of the indigenous culture. On the international front, for example, even before the emergence of mass Islamist

opposition, Muslim states registered their identity in relation to international treaties. In 1948, Saudi Arabia expressed its reservation in signing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the basis of Islamic law.[6] In an interesting contribution to the human-rights debate, Donna Artz (1990: 217) has documented the long history of Muslim states registering their reservations with respect to a host of human-rights legislation. Such an analysis shows that Muslim identity was employed by Muslim states before the rise of populist Islamist opposition movements. And, after the rise of Islamist movements, Muslim states continued to turn to Islamic identities in order to prolong their hold onto power on the domestic front. Algeria turned increasingly to Islamic symbols in the early 1970s, long before the emergence of Islamist opposition at the end of the 1980s, in an effort to obscure its failure in delivering the promises of independence. The Egyptian president Sadat (1970–81) styled himself 'the believing president' to distance himself from the socialist groups in the ruling party.

In the pursuit of clearly different agendas, Muslim identity was employed in politics by a diverse set of actors. Established states appealed to a reformist style of Muslim politics, but they were not averse to resorting to traditionalist or Islamist approaches on particular issues like human rights. The military regimes of Zia-ul-Haq (1977–88) and Nimeiry (1969–85) of Pakistan and the Sudan respectively should be seen as part of this broader pattern. They did not abandon their secular policies to join the Islamist camps but did what other Muslim political actors had mastered. They employed both modernist and Islamist approaches and symbols to articulate their political practices.[7] Islamist religious politics, which I see as identity politics, is not limited to opposition movements. All political actors draw freely on the Islamic styles of action to construct identities.

Another striking example that illustrates Muslim identity in public life has been the adoption of the headscarf by women in different societies. Since the 1970s, women have increasingly donned the headscarf as a statement of their faith, identity and/or public engagement. The headscarf has become a highly contested and controversial symbol, representing for some the true return of Islamic devotion, but for others the undeniable erosion of women's basic human rights. The visibility of the headscarf suggests that it is donned in conformity with either Islamist or traditionalist inclinations. At the same time, Islamist governments have used the body of women as the most readily available map on which to draw their ideological designs. It is often the first piece of legislation introduced by Islamising states, and the most visible sign of Islamic movements (Shehadeh 2003: 241). While this is undeniable, a number of detailed studies have expanded our understanding of this turn to the headscarf. In one of the earliest ethnographic studies on the headscarf, El Guindi showed that women were putting on headscarves for a variety of reasons. Though sometimes conflicting with each other, they range from family pressure to personal choice.

Lower-middle-class Muslim women in Egypt put on the headscarves precisely to participate in public life. Others have confirmed this trend of women wearing the headscarf on entering politics or the job market, and/or on pursuing university education (El Guindi 1981; Macleod 1991,1993; Göle 1996). The headscarf symbolises neither the expected modesty nor the suppression of women. It is a bold Islamic reformist commitment to return to the pure teachings of Islam in order to make a difference in public life. And yet, wearing the headscarf is also a clear rejection of the modernist position that assumes an emphasis on Islamic values rather than forms, allowing the latter to change. In this new contexts, the headscarf still negotiates its many different forms around the requirements of classical understandings of the *shari'a*, preserved and advocated by the ulama. The headscarf symbolises the construction of a religious identity out of the earlier styles of action.

Donning a headscarf symbolises more broadly the demands made by modern political societies on religions and cultures. If we turn again to the challenge of an egalitarian and free society, we recall the tension between sameness and difference, universality and particularity. Recalling Taylor, the ideal of an egalitarian society demanded that citizens conceal their differences to some extent. Freedom in such a society, however, conceded and celebrated differences. The Muslim discourse of authenticity between reformist and Islamist options gave contradictory opinions about the scarf. For the modernist, the idea of holding on to a particular symbol potentially undermined the general principles of Islam. If the headscarf meant something different from what the Qur'an and the Prophet had intended, then its true purpose was not being fulfilled. If the headscarf was merely used to go out in the public world, and not necessarily to preserve a sense of modesty, then its form has defeated its end. For the Islamist, the idea of holding on to a symbol in order to emphasise one's unique subjectivity was equally problematic. The Islamist vision of identity was intended to obliterate the self in a total vision of nature and order. Now, the donning of a headscarf threatened to make a very bold statement of subjectivity. Pluralistic societies demanded complete dissimulation as far as this particular Islamic practice is concerned. Overt symbols of religion should be properly internalised, and need not be displayed in a homogenous or egalitarian public space. For all these groups, a woman wearing a headscarf seems a thoroughly seditious statement in the politics of culture and identity.

I turn now to an exploration of jihadi Salafi activism as another form of identity politics that draws on the various Islamic styles of action. Olivier Roy, Gilles Kepel and others have argued that Salafism and related 'neo-fundamentalist' movements should be seen as the successors of Islamist politics, arising out of the failure of the Islamist movements themselves, or being the consequences of repressive regimes and international cold-war politics (Roy 1994; Kepel 2002). Such analyses help to explain the sequence of events that led to the emergence

of these groups. However, if we focus on the employment of symbols in their politics, and thus on the implications for identity, it seems better to pay close attention to their liberal employment of Islamic styles of action. Jihadi Salafism represents the amalgamation of both Islamist and traditionalist styles of action. It is very clear that the targets they have chosen are closely associated with the most powerful symbol of Western modernity. They have used the world as a terrain in which to strike at the power of the United States of America. In this regard, they are like the reformists and Islamists who are directly engaged with modernity. In their case, they obviously reject this modernity with a vehemence and rage that hardly anyone can ignore. But there is no doubt that they are fully aware of the mode of modern politics, its symbols and its values. Their awareness suggests an Islamist style, but their vehement rejection recalls the traditionalist style of action rather the Islamist one. Unlike the former, moreover, they are not interested in building an Islamic state, a state with a modern form that applies traditional values. When they have supported a modern state, as in Afghanistan, it was a state that jettisoned all its modern trappings. Their world view recalled the world that the traditionalists appeal to in their juridical opinions. Bin Laden's statements map contemporary conflicts onto the epic wars between Islam, the Sassanians and the Byzantines. He often turns to the Crusades as another fundamental conflict, which he asserts continues to this day. Even though he does not misread the hegemonic power of the United States, he refers to it as the manifestation of earlier epic conflicts. His is a political map of Mufti Shafi's juridical framework. In yet another construction, radical Muslims take the dissimulation of the self to its ultimate form. Theirs is the traditionalist awareness, not of the weakness of the self that cannot depend on its own judgement, but of the intensely committed and subjectivised self that must grasp the totality of good and evil and know that it is an irrefutable view of a natural order, and accordingly they must be prepared to empty themselves in its cause. Their subjectivity is based on an Islamist reading. Jihadi Salafism draws, then, on a modern Islamic project to restore the political order, on an Islamist identity that is committed to self-sacrifice and on the traditionalist vision of primordial foes and conflicts.

Conclusion

The defeat of 1967 marked an inexorable turn to identities. Muslim identities, with particular reference to their religious dimensions, are based on styles of action that have characterised Muslim attitudes and responses since the beginning of Islam. In the modern context, moreover, these styles of actions are imprinted by their critical responses to modern colonial and post-colonial states from the second half of the nineteenth century. Broadly speaking, there are three styles of actions of relevance to modern Muslim identities. These

are the reformists (modernists, adaptationists), Islamists (fundamentalists) and traditionalists. Using three Indian representatives, I have elaborated on their implications for identity. Building upon insights from both Taylor and Fanon, the chapter has turned attention to the dual critical movements directed against the self and the other.

With regard to the period after 1967, I propose that a more careful look at the availability of these options and patterns would help us understand the construction of modern Islamic religious identities. In this period, political action, dress and radical politics are hardly the preserve of any one of these highly charged appropriations of identities. They weave and play between the styles, liberally using the critical apparatuses that the earlier articulations provide. The religious dimensions of identities are given by the employment of these styles of action.

Summary of chapter

Muslim identities, with particular reference to their religious dimensions, are based on styles of action that have characterised Muslim attitudes and responses since the beginning of Islam. In the modern context, these styles of actions were imprinted by their critical responses to modern colonial and post-colonial states from the second half of the nineteenth century. Broadly speaking, there were three styles of actions of relevance to modern Muslim identities. These were the reformists (modernists, adaptationists), Islamists (fundamentalists) and traditionalists. Using three Indian representatives, this chapter has elaborated on their implications for identity in the framework of Taylor and Fanon. Taylor located identity in modernity and the Enlightenment, while Fanon located it in colonialism and post-colonialism. Building upon their insights, the chapter has turned attention to the double critical movements directed against the self and the other. The three styles of action provide the patterns and the choices on which identities have been constructed in various sites. They were already clearly articulated before the 1960s and 1970s, when the turn to identities on a global scale became evident. The post-1967 period provided an opportunity to create the self and the other out of the many possibilities presented by these early modern styles. Rather than examining reformists, Islamists and traditionalists as distinct movements or social groups, the chapter suggests that we see the construction of Muslim identities from their tropes and themes for individuals, states and societies who appropriated them after 1967.

Questions

1. The notion of identities arises in specific historical contexts. What do you think gave rise to different identities in different periods of the modern age? When did this take place? What was the meaning of identities in these different times? What was the impact of colonialism and modern state formation on identities?
2. This chapter has briefly referred to John Voll's analysis of Muslim 'styles of action' in response to change, in modern as well as in pre-modern times. Is the strong focus on identity formation in these responses specific to modernity? If so, why do you think this is the case?

3. One of Voll's types of response, the individualist style of action, is not further discussed in the chapter. Why do you think this is the case? Is identity construction necessarily a form of social engagement? What are the meaning and role of the individual in the framework of modern Muslim identities?
4. Muslim reform has commonly been understood as a process of renewal or return to the original spirit of the faith. However, it may be claimed that every renewal is also an invention. What elements of return, and what elements of invention, do you discern in modern reformism?
5. This chapter suggests that the uniqueness of Muslim identity as conceptualised by Khan was a collective right. Does the individual disappear in this framework? Discuss one other Islamic reformist in the light of the same question.
6. Which differences do you perceive between reformists and Islamists with respect to identity formation? Probe their different conceptualisation of universals and particularities, and discuss the implications this may have for state formation.
7. Traditionalist scholars appear more concerned about the individual than their reformist or Islamist counterparts. How could this be the case? What does their concern with the individual mean, and how does it relate to identity construction in modern egalitarian states?
8. Do these observations imply that the attitude of the traditionalist ulama could be more compatible with a modern focus on the individual than that of the reformists and Islamists?

Notes

1. A number of North African scholars, beginning with Abdallah Laroui, have identified this bifurcated critique to examine the crisis of the modern Arab intellectuals (Laroui 1976; Hanafi 1996; Hamil 2002).
2. The evolutionary thesis is not fully represented in his *Khutubat*, but the emphasis on the immutability of the laws of God is clearly present.
3. This book appeared in English translation under the title *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam* (Maudoodi 1972).
4. See also Adams's and Brown's analysis of this direction in Mawdudi's approach. Brown also links this to an earlier Indian reformist, Shibli (Adams 1976; Brown 1996).
5. Similarly, and equally convincingly, Binder has argued that Qutb, another leading Islamist, has resolved this dilemma by relying on a device from literary theory and subjective consciousness. Developing the idea of a visioning (*al-tasawwur*), Qutb's exegesis appealed to the need for attaining understanding by way of a total vision (Binder 1988: 185).
6. At the time, Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen signed the document (Artz 1990: 216). According to Kelsay, Pakistan signed without reservation on the basis of a reformist approach to Islamic law (Kelsay, in Little et al. 1988).
7. Islamist movements themselves were not consistent in their ideological commitment. Mawdudi supported the candidature of Fatima Jinnah in the 1965 presidential elections, departing from his extremely conservative, and *naturalist*, view of the role of women in Muslim society. He argued on the basis of a traditionalist juridical principle of choosing the lesser of two evils, and the right of a political leader to deduce new rulings just like the early caliphs had done, to justify the vote for Fatima Jinnah against Ayyub Khan (Sayeed 1966; McDonough 1984:

73; Maududi 1990). The *naturalist* Islamist position could easily draw on both the traditionalist and the modernist styles of action. Both were clearly articulated for Mawdudi to employ them in his political project. One might see this as the result of the demands of practical politics. I see this as a convenient appropriation of modernist and traditionalist facets in the construction of modern Muslim identities.

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Islam and Modernity

KEY ISSUES AND DEBATES

Edited by Muhammad Khalid Masud, Armando Salvatore and Martin van Bruinessen

Recent events have focused attention on the perceived differences and tensions between the Muslim world and the modern West. As a major strand of Western public discourse has it, Islam appears resistant to internal development and remains inherently pre-modern.

However, Muslim societies have experienced most of the same structural changes that have impacted upon all societies: massive urbanisation, mass education, dramatically increased communication, the emergence of new types of institutions and associations, some measure of political mobilisation, and major transformations of the economy. These developments are accompanied by a wide range of social movements and by complex and varied religious and ideological debates.

This textbook is a pioneering study providing an introduction to and overview of the debates and questions that have emerged regarding Islam and modernity. Key issues are selected to give readers an understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. The various manifestations of modernity in Muslim life discussed include social change and the transformation of political and religious institutions, gender politics, changing legal regimes, devotional practices and forms of religious association, shifts in religious authority, and modern developments in Muslim religious thought.

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